



BALCARRAS
From strength to strength

NEWSLETTER

Welcome from the Headteacher

Dear Parents,

I'd like to start this latest newsletter by wishing you all a very Happy Easter. It has been a very busy term at Balcarras and I think we are all happy to stop for a rest. That is all apart from the teachers who are leading trips away this Easter. 40 Year 10 pupils are going to Berlin with the history department, 38 Year 12s are going skiing to Norway and 28 sixth formers are doing their Gold D of E practice in the Black Mountains. I hope all of the pupils going have a great time. And to the rest of our pupils my best wishes for a lovely Easter holiday. It has been well earned.

We reach the Easter holidays with attendance on 95.2% which is 4.2% above the national average. This is good but I can't help but feel we should look to improve it further. We know that good attendance is the single most important factor in ensuring that pupils achieve well at school. Let us all re-double our efforts to ensure that attendance is excellent next term.

It has been a vintage debating season this year and we are now all set for the final at lunchtime on Tuesday 16th April. It promises to be a classic!

Hold the Back Page.....

Sporting news just in...

As this newsletter goes to print we have just heard that Balcarras have won the Gloucestershire Schools Golf Championships for the second year running. They will progress to the National Finals at Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire. More details on the website shortly.

Keep up to date on all our news:

WWW.BALCARRAS.GLOUCS.SCH.UK

VISIT OF UNITY SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

DOMINIC BURKE

On Thursday 29th February we hosted a visit of 18 headteachers from the Unity Schools Partnership in Suffolk. They spent time at Balcarras and at our sister school, The High School Leckhampton. They were hugely impressed by the quality of provision in our schools. I believe strongly in sharing ideas and I'm always keen to meet other headteachers and school leaders.

GREAT TERM FOR MUSIC

DOMINIC BURKE

On Tuesday 5th March I attended the Annual Spring Concert which is a showcase of GCSE and A-level work. I sat at the back with a bag of Wine Gums for company and just let myself be immersed in the music. It was exceptional. The level of the performances was incredible and it was just a genuine joy to be there. At the end I stood at the door and one parent said to me: "This just gets better and better." She is right. It's not just the standard either—it's the whole culture and ethos around music which just seems to build year on year. The department is living out the values of the school as expressed in our motto: *from strength to strength*.

I'd like to thank everyone involved...the site team, the tech team so ably led by Caleb Horne, the instrumental teachers and Mr Howell, Mrs Watts and Mr Armstrong. Special shout out to Mrs Watts who spent most of the evening on the piano accompanying pupils. How she does it I'll never know. It was a joy!

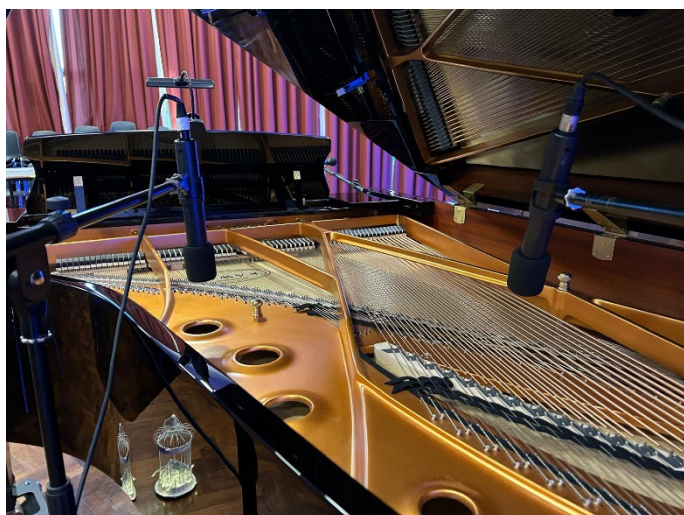
Welcome to the KAWAI GX6

On Wednesday 6th March we held a special welcome event for our new grand piano. It also served as an opportunity to thank those people who had sponsored it. It was very informal and included about 8 performances from students and staff. The standard was incredibly high although it did dip somewhat when I took to the keys.

I made the point in my talk that we strive here to give our pupils the very best facilities in the spirit of always wanting to engineer social mobility. I think we are doing a good job on that. I've never been to a state school with better facilities for music.

But I also made the point that, whilst it is nice to have such lovely things, our most crucial asset is the staff, who day in and day out inspire young people onto great things.

I love music and I have always believed that it should play a central role in the life of a school. It certainly does at Balcarras.



PASTORAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR
INGER BOURNE



I am delighted to have been appointed as the Pastoral Support Supervisor for Balcarras School. I will be working in the well-being room, every day, where I can oversee the care and support of students during the school day.

Inger Bourne

SKI TRIP 2025
MALCOLM DEAN, SKI TRIP LEADER

Ski Trip 2025 (Sunday 16th to Saturday 22nd February)

Applications are invited for the next year's Ski Trip to Myrkdalen, Norway. The trip will be open to pupils who will be in Years 8 to 13 from September.

Application letters will be sent out (to all who have registered their interest) in the 1st week back after Easter.

We anticipate that demand for the trip will be high. Should the trip be over-subscribed, we will endeavour to split our allocation equally between each year group.

The cost of the trip will be £1395.

In the meantime, feel free to register your interest (if you have not already done so) by emailing:
mcd@baltarras.gloucs.sch.uk

CAREERS NEWS
VICKY BULL, CAREERS LEAD

This term has been busy as ever with speakers in, visits and careers in the curriculum. We have a new newsletter which we will be sending out termly - please look out for this.

Year 10 work experience forms were due in January and we are slowly now getting these in. We need to undertake full risk assessments of all placements and ask that any outstanding forms are sent directly in to careers@baltarras.gloucs.sch.uk as a matter of urgency. **All students are required to have a place July 8th-12th.** If any of our school wider community are able to support a pupil with a placement, please get in touch as we are very short of potential places for any students who have not secured a plan.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH VICKY BULL, DoE

Year 10 are currently busy route planning, thank you for all the support with their sections and planning so far. Expedition season will soon be upon us and after Easter kit will be issued. Any kit that students can borrow from family and friends is encouraged such as rucksacks and tents due to the numbers of pupils taking part.

Year 11

91 year 11 students who completed the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh scheme last year and have received their awards at our annual presentation event. This is a huge achievement for them! We were very lucky to be joined by Rich Whincup on the night, a valued friend of the school, a DofE ambassador and international women's rugby coach to present the Awards. As always, his words were inspirational!

As a part of the scheme, students learnt a skill, carry out a period of physical activity and undertook at least 3 months of volunteering. Collectively, this group of students alone have contributed nearly 1500 hours of voluntary service to the local community. Students also carried out 2 expeditions, navigating the beautiful Cotswold countryside to secure their Bronze Award. Absent students will receive their certificates in assembly.



BALCARRAS YEAR 11 PROM 2024

ELEN PARRY

We are looking forward to celebrating with Year 11 at their Prom on Friday 26th April at the DoubleTree Hilton on the Cirencester Road. The event runs from 7.30 - 11.00pm (with arrivals from 7pm) and the ticket price will be £25 - parents are welcome to contribute more to the event if they wish, so we are able to add some extra treats for the students on the evening. The ticket price includes a welcome drink, buffet, DJ, popcorn stand and a photobooth. Please note, this is an invite only event. Payment via Scopay is already open and the final deadline for payments is Wednesday 10th April.

Please note that the kitchen at the venue is not a nut free environment. Should you have any queries, please contact Miss Parry on ep@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk. We look forward to seeing you there!

MUSIC NEWS

DAN ARMSTRONG & JANE WATTS, MUSIC

Tracey Vacher - Piano Exams

Matthew Johnston (Y8) - grade 3 - Merit, ABRSM

Miyah Wharton (Y11) - grade 3 - Distinction, MTB

Isaac Costa-Hall (Y10) - grade 4 - Distinction, MTB

Karen Sykes - Jazz Sax Exams

James Chappell-Smith (Y13) - grade 8 - Distinction 94 marks

Kate Skeet - Viola

Owen Chung (Y8) - grade 1 viola - distinction - MTB board.

Matt Bucher - Drums

George Meatherel (Y9) 84% Merit Grade 2 Rock School

Leo Mcwhirter (Y8) 90% Distinction Grade 2 Rock School

Jack Passey (Y11) - grade 7 - Distinction in grade 7 piano in Music Performance with Trinity.

Upcoming Events

Jazz Festival – Balcajazz - Sat 4th May 1-1:30pm - free stage in Montpellier
Midsummer Music – Friday 21st June – 6pm

YOUNG ENTERPRISE TRADE FAIR

JACK GODDARD, TEACHER OF BUSINESS

On Thursday 14th March both Balcarras Young Enterprise teams made the trip to Cirencester to take part in the Young Enterprise Trade Fair.

This was a chance for both teams to engage with the general public and have a chance to sell their product and learn from the experience.

Both teams did brilliantly and lots of sales were made! Next stop the regional finals in April.



SUMMER UNIFORM

NEIL BAXTER, DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

From 8th April, pupils may wear the summer uniform to school if they wish. This is optional, and if pupils prefer to wear the winter uniform they may do so. (Full details of the uniform are on the school website.)

SIXTH FORM UPDATE

DARREN LEATHERBARROW, HEAD OF SIXTH FORM

Sixth Form Dress Up Day

The 2024 Sixth Form Dress Up Day on Friday 15th March was yet another triumph of ingenuity, imagination and incredible costumes. Everywhere one could look, there were quality outfits and so many clever collaborations it was hard to keep count. From the Corpse Bride and Victor, to Where's Wally, Claudia Winkleman and the Traitors to the Balcarras PE Department, Dinosaurs, Cowboys, Jockeys, In the Night Garden, Shrek, Fiona and other assorted inhabitants of Duloc, One Direction, Presidents Trump and Biden, and Penelope van Schweetz and Wreck It Ralph - the list could go on and on. A longer report and some photographs of the highlights will be on the school website shortly.

Lessons from Auschwitz

On Wednesday 20th March, six Year students, Jack Bee-Stephens, Leo Birt, Emily Johnson, Charlie Jones-Jobst, Cadhla Leatherbarrow and Katie Terrell were all fortunate enough to participate on the Holocaust Education Trust's 'Lessons from Auschwitz' programme. Having all participated in an online preparation seminar the weekend before, all travelled to Birmingham Airport, and on to Poland where they visited the town of Oswiecim (in German, Auschwitz) and visited the notorious Nazi concentration and extermination camps of Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau. All will be participating in a follow up seminar soon, and undertaking a 'reflections' project in school based on their experiences. Updates on the students' experiences and follow up project will appear on the website after the Easter break.

Sixth Form 2024-25 - Post -Application Consultations

The post-application consultations for all our Balcarras Year 11 applicants have now been completed. The Sixth Form team is busy working their way through the final waves of consultations with our applicants from other centres. Once this task is completed shortly after Easter, conditional offer letters and invitations to our Sixth form Induction morning on Tuesday 2nd July will be distributed. The team are working as fast as they can, but with Balcarras Sixth form being so popular and over-subscribed - we received over 500 applications - this is taking time!

Year 13 Last Day

Our Year 13 cohort will have their final day at Balcarras on Friday 10th May. This will be a 4-lesson day, followed by a final assembly after lunch, and a leaver's BBQ. The first A-level examination will take place on Tuesday 14th May. We wish the whole cohort the very best with their examinations and hope all go on to attain the grades they have been striving for, and access to their preferred post-18 destinations!

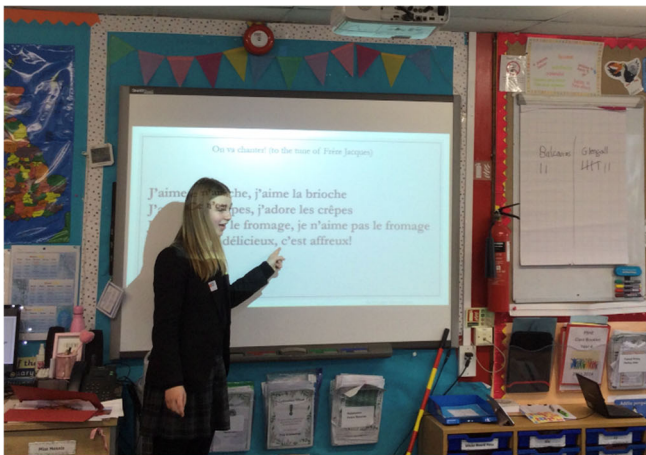
Y13 Leaver's Prom

We are delighted to announce that our annual Y13 Leaver's Prom will be held on Tuesday 2nd July. This year, the prom will be held in the Cheltenham Town Hall - a beautiful landmark building perfectly located in the centre of Cheltenham. As always, this will be a formal event with a 2 course sit down meal and a welcome drink, there will be a DJ, photographer and various awards given out throughout the evening. Tickets are priced at £45 and are available on Scopay, any families with financial difficulties are very welcome to contact Mrs Crowley in the Sixth Form office to discuss how we may be able to help. The evening is a wonderful chance for the students to celebrate their journey at Balcarras and to bid farewell to their peers and staff.

LANGUAGES DAY

ALISON BIRD, TEACHER OF MFL

On Wednesday 28th February 14 pupils from Year 8 and 9 spent the morning at Glenfall Primary School to take part in a Languages Day. The pupils planned short lessons for pupils in Year 1 - Year 6 to teach them about the language and culture of France, Germany and Russia. The sessions included lots of games, as well as some singing and dancing. The Balcarras pupils, who are members of the 'Language Leaders Club', really enjoyed the experience and have learnt how rewarding (and tiring!) teaching can be. We would like to thank Glenfall Primary School for hosting us.



BALCARRAS SQUASH TEAM COMPETE IN NATIONAL FINALS

MARK HARVEY, HEAD OF PE

A big congratulations to our squash team who finished 5th overall in the KS3 boys national schools finals competition.



They unfortunately lost their first round in a closely fought 4-1 match against Severnoaks school. They then went on to win their next two fixtures 4-1 against John Hampden Grammar School and then Challenors School.

They played their best for each other and supported each other throughout the entire day which was fantastic to see.

They were a pleasure to be with the entire time and are definitely inspired to push on with squash and compete again next year.

Huge congratulations to Sam Terrell, Thomas Naylor, Sam Heys, Will Heys and Jude Kells.

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House matches results – thanks to all pupils that took part!

The winners are....

Year 7

Netball: **Selvey**

Football: **Ottewell**

Badminton: **Selvey**

Year 8&9

Netball: **Ottewell**

Football: **Graveney**

Badminton: **Selvey**

Year 10&11

Netball: **Selvey**

Football: **Selvey**

Badminton: **Foley**



BOOST

JEREMY NIBLETT, TEACHER OF PHYSICS

Last week, the pupils involved in the Boost programme went on a trip to Oxford University. They were joined by three of Balcarras' alumni; Joe, Ted and Meg. The Balcarras pupils then got to ask the alumni questions about Oxford, all answers were honest and insightful whilst also displaying a range of different University experiences. Year 12's time at Oxford was a fantastic opportunity for them to consider post-18 options, while also learning from each other and the Balcarras alumni.

Lastly, Holly, Matthew, Evie, Bea and Mark all gave fantastic speeches to their peers. Holly gave a powerful speech about "who she aspires to be" discussing the importance of relationships in achieving happiness, Matthew gave a speech on how perfectionism holds him back, Bea gave a thought-provoking speech about Daisy May Cooper's acting career, Evie talked to us about to career path she aspires to take, and Mark gave a powerful speech about his time in Ukraine, leaving us with an inspiring quote: "Never regret a day in your life: good days give happiness, bad days give experience, best days give memories, and worse days give lessons."

Written by Amber Forde 12C



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: MACBETH BOX CLEVER THEATRE

JESS HEATHER, TEACHER OF ENGLISH

On Friday 8th March Year 11 students watched a performance of their GCSE play 'Macbeth' by Box Clever Theatre. The performance took place in school and all the students got to watch (some participated!) and then there was the opportunity for a Q and A with the actors. It was an incredible performance and a really useful experience ahead of their exams. The staff and students had a great time - lots of smiling faces.



PLANTING TREES

JON PEARCE, ECOCLUB

The schools Eco group have been planting trees on the school site, these are native British species, designed for hedgerows; Hazel, Dog rose, Blackthorn, Crab apple, Dog wood and Hawthorn. These are good also for biodiversity and create a range of niches for invertebrates and birds on the school site.

By planting trees we will meet two of the areas we would like to improve. Trees are good at taking in CO₂ from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and storing it within the tree. As a school we produce over 300 tonnes of CO₂ a year to heat and light the school, so these trees go some way to reducing this impact we have.

We have also been carrying out some pond maintenance and have cleared one of the ponds to repair the liner. This is now being rebuilt and redesigned by the eco group

NEWSLETTER



The newsletter will now be distributed by email and available to view on our VLE (Firefly) as well as on the school website.

It is incredibly easy and will save the school a lot of paper and the planet a lot of trees!

If you would still prefer a hard copy, please contact Karen Adkins
ksa@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) @balcarras and Facebook, Facebook.com/BalcarrasSchool for updates and news about school life and events.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dominic Burt', with a horizontal line underneath.

Headteacher





Charlton Kings Tennis Place 2024

Our new season is fast upon us and we are pleased to let you know about our tennis coaching programme for this year.

We are based at Balcarras School and are known for being welcoming, friendly and providing a good quality programme for the local community. Our venue has seven outdoor courts.



Junior Tennis Coaching

10-week courses for children aged 7 and above, of all abilities
At Balcarras School, Cheltenham
Mondays starting 29 April
Saturdays starting 27 April

Group coaching sessions combine teaching and improving tennis skills with a variety of drills and fun games
Led by a LTA licensed and qualified coach

Courses open to everyone, benefits available to club members

Private coaching and summer camps also available

For more information or to book a course please visit
Charlton Kings Tennis Place
<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/CharltonKingsTennisPlace>
Call / WhatsApp Denisa Davis on 07803 741859
email ddtenniscoaching@gmail.com

Here's what's available:

- Junior courses – please [click here](#) to view
- Adult courses – please [click here](#) to view
- Summer holiday camps – please [click here](#) to view

You can also [become a member](#) of our thriving club which gives you the following added benefits:

- book courts using our online booking system
- organised junior club and adult social tennis sessions
- fun tournaments and competitions

- membership rates for all coaching activities
- being part of a sociable, inclusive and friendly club

Memberships are only £60 per adult, £33 per junior or £130 per family for the whole season from April to October.

For further information about everything we have to offer visit www.charltonkingstennisplace.co.uk or email tennis@charltonkingstennisplace.co.uk

For further information about coaching please contact Denisa Davis on 07803 741 859 or email DDtenniscoaching@gmail.com



ULTIMATE ACTIVITY CAMPS

GET SET FOR ULTIMATE HOLIDAY FUN!

EARLY BOOKING OFFER NOW ON!

PAY BY CHILD CARE VOUCHERS

POSTED REGISTERED

FRESH AIR FUN

INSPIRING CHILDREN EVERYDAY

FLEXIBLE BOOKINGS

Outstanding holiday camps for 4 to 14 year olds from 8 am to 6 pm throughout the school Easter & summer holidays at

DEAN CLOSE PREP SCHOOL IN CHELTENHAM

ULTIMATEACTIVITY.CO.UK



RCO International Organ Day

Saturday 20th April 2024 from 1.30 – 4.00 pm

Come and Play the Organ!

St. Andrew's United Reformed Church
 Montpelier St, Cheltenham GL50 1SP.
 Gloucestershire Organists' Association and the Royal College of Organists invite you to

An Introduction to the Pipe Organ and how it works followed by a chance for you to play the organ yourself!

Two sessions, free of charge, starting at 2pm and 3pm and led by Simon Williams (Teacher & RCO Director). No previous experience necessary. Complete Beginners on the Keyboard welcome. Feel free to bring along some music to play. Refreshments available.

PLUS – International Organ Day Celebrity Recital given by Thomas Trotter, 7.30pm at Cheltenham College Chapel, GL53 7LD. Book tickets in advance - www.ticketsource.co.uk/cheltenham-college



Spring Fayre

For more information visit: sueryder.org/springfayre email: leckhampton.fundraising@sueryder.org

Entrance fee on day: £2.50
FREE for children under 12

JOIN US!

Saturday 23 March
 10am–5pm
 Leckhampton Court Hospice grounds

BBQ, pop-up bar and tasty treats
 Live music and entertainment
 Leckhampton Court Tea Rooms
 Lots of family friendly activities

Sponsored by **PerryBishop**
 Supported by **CREED** THE FOODSERVICE COMPANY

Sue Ryder Because no one should face death or grief alone