

## Update from the Head

### Friday 5th September

We are back up and running at Balcarras! It has been a great first week back—the pupils looked so smart in their uniform and there has been a real buzz around the school all week. This is my 19th year at Balcarras but I still retain a real excitement and nervousness as the new term begins. Here's to a great year ahead!

It will be Balcarras's 40th year. The school opened in September 1986 so we will have to find a way to celebrate our 40th birthday in the year ahead.

### A Level/GCSE Results

I will give a full update on results in the first newsletter but the short news is...they were excellent. We achieved 69% A\* to B at A level which is our second best ever and the vast majority of pupils secured their preferred option for next year. At GCSE 67% of pupils achieved a 5+ in English and maths which is very high. The value-added score places us comfortably inside the top 10% of schools nationally once more. The vast majority of the year group secured access to their preferred next step. We wish them well for the future.

### New Year 7 and Year 12

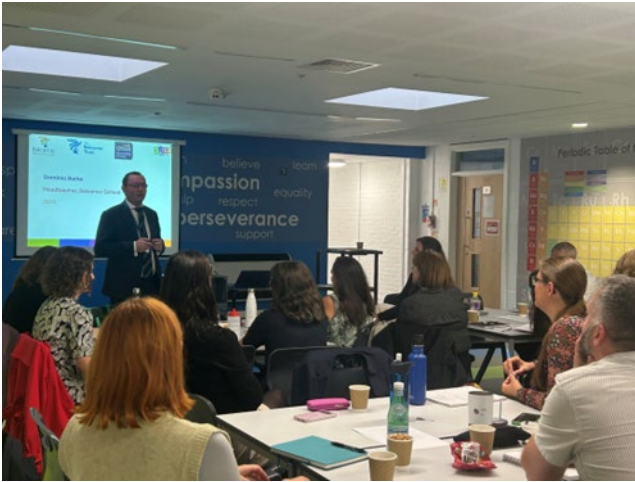
On Tuesday I met the incoming Year 7 and Year 12. I did assemblies with both year groups and also tried to chat to as many of them as I could. The Year 7s made a really positive start. I said to them in my assembly that first impressions are important. Well, they couldn't have made a better impression in their first week. It was great to meet a new Year 12 cohort as well. We have about 215 pupils joining us with over 85 joining from other schools. Here is a photograph of me meeting 3 new Year 7 pupils at break on Tuesday:

### Welcome Back to other Year Groups

On Wednesday I did assemblies with every year group in the school. I urged the young people to really look forward to their education and to try to enjoy it as much as possible. I also encouraged them to get involved in as much extracurricular activity as possible.



## Lecture to Trainee Teachers



Also on Wednesday I went to Severn Vale School In Gloucester to give a lecture to the 75 student teachers on the Gloucestershire Initial Education Partnership (GITEP) course. GITEP is a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) provider based in Gloucestershire. It has existed since 1997 and has trained thousands of teachers. Balcarras is the lead school in GITEP and I am Chair of the GITEP Partnership Board. GITEP comprises over 30 secondary schools in Gloucestershire, all working together to provide placements for trainee teachers.

My lecture was on teacher professional standards and ethics. I always enjoy the opportunity to work with trainee teachers and this group were really switched on. The future of the profession is in safe hands!

In addition to my lecture, Miss Cullis also did one on the educational landscape in Gloucestershire, and next week Mr Constance will run a session on wellbeing. These are all good examples of how Balcarras plays a wider role in the local educational environment.

## PTFA Meeting

The Balcarras PTFA had its first meeting of the year on Wednesday evening in the staffroom at Balcarras. Mr Constance and I went along. We are very fortunate as a school to have such a committed group of parents who are willing to give their time to support the school. Last year the events organised by the PTFA raised over £13,000 for the school.

The good news is that as parents you are all automatically members of the PTFA. The next meeting is Wednesday 24th September at 7pm in the staffroom. This meeting also doubles as the AGM. Please do come along and join us.

## Closure of the A40

I sent an email out to all parents earlier in the week about the very busy state of the village particularly at peak times. We will continue to reinforce the message amongst the pupils that it is very important to be extra vigilant when walking along the pavements particularly where they narrow around the Merryfellow and Yangtze.

## Lunchtime Finish Friday

We have always operated a half day on the Friday of the first week back. Starting school again is high energy work and we think it makes sense for the pupils to have Friday afternoon to relax and take stock. It also gives the staff of the school chance to meet and to undergo important training for the year ahead.

I hope you all have a nice weekend. I'm going to Villa Park for the first ever time to watch England v Andorra.

## Dominic Burke