

Update from the Head

It's got significantly colder this week—I quite like it that the weather is more seasonal although I hate talk of snow! I wince every time I see a headline which is forecasting snow—fortunately it has all been much further North than us so far.

My week started with a meeting with Phil Haslett who is the Assistant Director of Education at Gloucestershire County Council. Phil is an expert on education funding and he is also a member of the F40 Campaign group which exists to try to create a fair funding system in this country. I have got to know Phil well from being part of the Gloucestershire Schools Forum. Can you believe that almost halfway through the 21st Century we have an education funding system which is based on historic decisions that were taken decades ago? If our children lived in a different part of the country they would have significantly more money spent on their education. Gloucestershire is in the bottom 15% of all education authorities for school funding and the bottom 15% for Special Educational Needs funding. How can this be right? And why on earth is it allowed to continue?

Fire Drill

On Tuesday we had a full fire drill—all 1430 pupils and the entire staff mustered at the back of the school. The pupils were brilliant, as usual, and it went without a hitch.

Girls Football

GREAT News! The Year 7 Girls are through to the County Championships after a sterling performance at the District. See article here:



Sixth Form Apprenticeship Event

On Wednesday Mrs Lewis and Mrs Towers arranged for several local apprenticeship providers to visit the school to speak to 6th formers who are possibly interested in following this route. I am very grateful to all those companies or institutions that attended. See news article here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1351>



Astronomy Event with the Cheltenham Education Partnership

On Thursday pupils from across Cheltenham attended an astronomy masterclass led by our very own Mr Niblett. I went up to have a look and it was very interesting. Mr Niblett started the session with a team quiz. I thought you might like to have a go:

1. How many planets in our solar system do not have any moons?
2. What is the real name of the North Star?
3. The Sun is composed primarily of which chemical element?
4. Vesta is the third largest what?
5. What is larger the Earth or Venus?
6. Who was the first man to travel into space?
7. What is the phenomenon 'aurora borealis' better known as?
8. In 1610, who discovered the four largest moons of Jupiter using a telescope?
9. Where would you find the great red spot?
10. In astronomy, what does the terminator refer to?

Answers next week. The highest team score was 8/10.

After the quiz and various activities, and once it had got dark enough, the group went outside to use our excellent telescope (donated by the PTFA) and one that Cleeve School brought along. Amongst the highlights of star gazing the group were able to view Saturn!

GCHQ Languages Competition

A group of Yr 9 pupils have been taking part in the GCHQ National Language Competition this week.

The competition started on Monday and concludes today (Friday) and involves completing language-based puzzles to earn points.

The group have done brilliantly with their problem solving skills and have had a taste of what it could be like to become a GCHQ linguist in the future!

Sixth Formers Visit University of Gloucestershire for Psychology Taster Day

On Wednesday 25 psychology students visited the University of Gloucestershire for a taster day based around studying psychology and related courses at university. My thanks to Mrs Collinson for arranging it.

Christmas Lunches

Bookings for Christmas lunch are now open. Please book via scopay by 4th December.



Christmas Dinner

*Tuesday 9th December
(years 7&8-1)*

*Wednesday 10th December
(years 8-2 & 9)*

*Thursday 11th December
(years 10 & 11)*

*Friday 12th December
(years 12 & 13)*

Menu

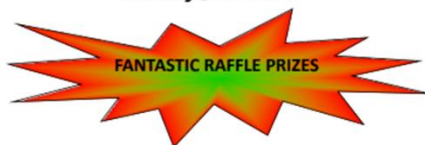
Roast Turkey

Roasted Vegetable & Feta Cheese Tart
(vegan option available on request)

Roast Potatoes, Stuffing, Pigs in Blankets,
Brussels, Carrots & Peas

Christmas Pudding, Mince Pie or Ice Cream

The Cost will be £4.95 per person. Please pay online via Scopay no cash will be taken for payment, Online payment will close on Thursday 4th December



School Nurse Extended Service Consultation Meeting with Parents

Reminder that we have an information evening for parents on Tuesday 25th November at 5.30 about the School Nurse Extended Service that Balcarras has been offered. All of the information is here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1335>

Gloucestershire SEND Survey

The local authority have written to all school encouraging them to share the link to their SEND survey for parents. This survey has been developed by the Local Area Partnership of services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Gloucestershire.

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=VMeuX-NkFECbzOcvxzujEjvW4nf_rFpJnkYqUszlhxpmUMzU4NDc0OEpVMDFCOUFQVUtNNFVSNFIYSi4u&origin=QRCode

If you have a child with special educational needs and you have the time then please do fill it in.

Right, that's it. It is a quiet weekend for me. I will watch Leeds v Villa on the telly on Sunday. I can't say I am very hopeful for our chances.

Dominic Burke