



SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2025-2028



Balcarras
Teaching School Hub



MATHSHUBS
GLOW



The
Balcarras
Trust

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 **Introduction: what do we believe in?**

We want to continue to be real advocates for comprehensive and inclusive education. We believe in building a society where people are encouraged to support one another and to celebrate each other's contribution and success.

We want the school to encourage the development of confident young people who are ready to contribute to their society.

We continue to believe in the importance of:

ABC

and

EEE

Attendance: Promoting good attendance is first and foremost done by making school enjoyable for young people. Beyond that most important responsibility the school should look to continue to develop its systems so that we work closely with young people who, for whatever reason, do not attend as we would wish.

Behaviour: For many years we have built and developed a positive behaviour culture which has just improved year on year. However, this has not happened by accident. We do things habitually and organise the school's systems well. These systems in turn help to support strong behaviour. We encourage all staff to buy into this positive behaviour culture. We don't want a school where every pupil does what they are told. We want a school where children seldom need telling because they just *know* how to behave.

Classroom: beyond getting the culture right, as referenced above, the most important thing to do is to continue to recruit superb teachers, make sure the school's systems support them, and then just get out of the way and *expect* that they will inspire and motivate the pupils. Focussing on the classroom as the 'engine room' of progress will continue to be our watchword.

Beyond ABC we have **EEE:**

Enjoyment

Put simply we want school to be fun. We want the pupils to be keen to come to school every day. This means that the five lessons they will attend should be engaging and lively. It means that there should be extra-curricular activity to look forward to for ALL pupils. We want the corridors of the school to be buzzing with happy and engaged youngsters, chatting to one another and learning to socialise.

Extra-Curricular

There should be something for everyone. The school should celebrate those members of staff who are willing to give their time.

Environment

We want the schools' buildings and facilities to be a metaphor for its standards. We will continue to invest what resource we have into the upkeep of the buildings and the development of our facilities.

ABC and EEE continue to be easily understood aims and principles. They served us well during the OFSTED inspection in March 2025. Explaining them is how we started the conversation with the lead inspector. Staff and pupils are reminded of them at the start of each year.

Context

As we set off on a new cycle of development planning, we continue to face strong headwinds. Our real terms funding is reducing year on year. At the same time our remit continues to expand. We have had to get used to doing more with less and we don't believe this is likely to change. At the time of writing the crisis in High Needs shows no sign of abating and I think we will have to be highly skilled and adaptive to ensure that the crisis in funding does not impact the SEND pupils in the school. Inevitably we will have to review elements of the school's work so that we are able to balance the budget into the future. Although the pandemic is now fading into memory the forces it unleashed are still affecting schools. We have seen an increase in anxiety generally but especially amongst female pupils. We will need to continue to address this issue and to ensure that these pupils are given the very best support.

We are a comprehensive school and we are proud to be so. We continue to operate in a selective county and, as we write this plan, several of the selective schools are consulting on changing their admissions policies in order to become more local. This is a threat to the comprehensive schools of the county. We will best meet this threat by continuing to offer a vibrant and successful comprehensive education that allows **ALL** children to flourish no matter what their starting point. Carefully tracking the progress of all pupils and ensuring that they all have strong outcomes will be key to our future success.

The financial headwinds are quite something. We have reduced staffing and some costs as we enter 2025-26. This will allow the school to achieve an in-year surplus. We are looking to repeat this in 2026-27 so that we build the reserve.

In terms of benchmarking our intake we continue to attract a comprehensive mix into the school. Here is the data for 2025-26

Year	KS2 Avg SS	Pupils	High PA	Middle PA	Low PA
2022	106.5	205	70 (36)	102 (52)	23 (12)
2023	107.6	194	93 (51)	51 (28)	37 (21)
2024	108.2	216	107 (55)	64 (33)	25 (13)
2025	104.5	197	60	110	26
11	107.1	194	66	121	5
10	106.9	198	61 (35)	90 (52)	22 (13)
9	106.3	197	63 (34)	97 (53)	23 (13)
8	107	195	61 (34)	96 (54)	22 (12)
7	108.2	209	96 (51)	77 (41)	15 (8)

The average point score on entry for 2025 is 108.2. This is the joint highest we have had. This means we continue to attract a genuinely comprehensive intake into the school.

Core Areas of the Plan:

1. Curriculum

Continue to provide a Broad and Balanced Curriculum

We want to maintain the strength of the core curriculum whilst maintaining the vitality and life that the creative curriculum offers the school. There is room for both. Whilst we are convinced that we have a strong curriculum we should continue to keep it under review.

Creativity at the heart of the Curriculum

Continue our support for Design Technology, Art, PE, Drama, Music and the creative curriculum

- Maintain significant gains made in take up of DT and value-added scores at both GCSE and A level

Numbers in GCSE design and technology remain high. With 71 pupils in Year 10 selecting food (37% of the cohort) and additional pupils on a waiting list to join this subject. 75 pupils have selected product design (39% of the cohort). Numbers in textiles are lower with only 6 pupils selecting the subject. This is a marked change in trend as the subject had been growing more popular and identifying the reason behind this will be a key focus. Overall 69% of pupils are taking a design technology course at GCSE.

In Year 11 77 pupils are studying food (40% of the cohort) with 74 studying product design (38% of the cohort) and 25 pupils studying textiles. Overall 76% of the cohort are taking a design technology course at GCSE.

The 2025 GCSE result cohort did not have prior assessment data and so no national value-added figures will be calculated. However, internal calculations using CAT4 data as a baseline put both food and design and technology (which includes product design and textiles) on an ALPS score of 2 putting them in the 10% nationally for value added.

In Year 12 there are 41 students taking product design (2 healthy groups), 19 studying food and 9 studying textiles.

In Year 13 there are 37 students taking product design (again 2 healthy groups), 10 studying food and 12 studying textiles.

- Boost GCSE music take up to 20+ and take up at Year 12 to 12+

The year 10 cohort starting their GCSE in 2025 has 24 pupils which is a significant increase on the Year 11 cohort with 10 pupils. Year 12 has 7 pupils while Year 13 has 10. An important step will be in maintaining the gains made at GCSE into A Level.

- Support for leadership of Drama during period of staff leave

The drama department has a strong acting head of subject in HEW who has shown herself to be effective. She is supported by EJC as an experienced line manager in the school. There is a specialist drama teacher in place to cover the maternity leave, and all drama classes are taught by drama specialists. The increased group size required in Year 12 and 13 as a result of financial constraints has been offset by the allocation of a break out space to allow pupils adequate rehearsal facilities.

- Continue to see strong take up art at GCSE and A level and photography at A level.

In the Year 10 cohort starting their GCSE in 2025 85 pupils have opted to study art. This is 45% of the cohort. This shows that art continues to be a popular option. This is an increase on Year 11 where 39% of the cohort have selected the subject. There is a Year 12 group of 23 students and a Year 13 group of 19 showing that art is a viable and popular A Level subject. Photography numbers are 15 in Year 12 and 19 in Year 13. These group sizes are viable but slightly higher recruitment into Year 12 should remain a focus.

Development of MFL

Our offer for MFL across three core languages and two extra-curricular languages is very strong. Across this plan we would like to:

- Boost take up of MFL at GCSE to 65%+

In Year 11 2025-2026 62% of pupils are taking a language at GCSE. This is close to the 65% and it had looked like progress was being made towards this target. However, in the Year 10 cohort only 56% of pupils are taking a language. This is well below the target and as such recruitment into languages at GCSE should remain a priority.

- Boost take up at Year 12 to 45+

In Year 12 there are 12 students taking Spanish, 9 taking French and 7 taking Russian this give a total of 28. Work trying to increase recruitment into A Level languages needs to continue.

In Year 13 there are 8 students studying Spanish, 7 studying French and 9 taking Russian.

- Value added outcomes at GCSE to be +0.8 (not withstanding that VA figures in Russian are misleading)

The 2025 GCSE cohort did not have prior assessment data and so value-added scores will not be calculated or published nationally. Internal calculations using CAT4 data as a base line shows that French has made good progress and is an ALPS 2 putting it in the top 10% for the progress the pupils have made. Spanish is an ALPS 5 in the 50th percentile and so improving the progress of the pupils in this area is a priority. The school is hopeful that the introduction of the new style of GCSE will help with this.

Future of IT/Computing?

Through the course of this plan we will continue to review the place of computing, IT and creative media in the curriculum. Our provision is strong but ideally we would like to expand our offer at Key Stage 3 and re-introduce creative media at post 16. Both of these developments will require extra capacity and will need to be thought about very carefully.

The financial constraints on the school 2024-2025 and then into 2025-2026 led to a reduction in the overall teaching staff. In this context the school has not moved forward with expanding its computing offer. In order to expand in Key Stage 3 additional teaching staff would be required and the curriculum time would need to be found from another subject. As the financial future of the school becomes clearer, we will continue to look at increased provision.

2. Teaching

Relentless focus on the quality of teaching and learning by focusing on the following:

- Continue to ensure that the school's INSET programme is informed by the latest research and evidence

Teaching and learning have continued to develop with Rosenshine's Principles being the core evidence base that we have used.

- Continue to develop our offer around continuing professional development

This has developed over the last 2 years as our CPD programme has become even more robust.

There are many opportunities for CPD in subject areas and we are always looking for opportunities for other types of training. RJA had meetings with a group of teachers from January 2025 to develop our offer and for them to give feedback. The outcomes of this have fed into the appraisal process. There is a new trust wide professional development group that is starting this year.

Another great part of CPD this year has been for the GITEP subject mentors. With the new DfE ITT strategy that started in September 2024 all mentors were to have 20 hours training in the first year

with 6 hours in subsequent years. This has been excellent and the mentors have engaged fully and have enjoyed the training which has been a mixture of online and face to face sessions throughout the year.

- Continue to make NPQs available to as many staff as possible
- Continue to use the expertise of those staff who have been on NPQs (20+ in the last three years) to drive a conversation around teaching and learning
- Continue to prize recruitment so that we hire the very best staff

We made two teaching appointments for 2025-26.

- Continue to play a leading role in the training of new teachers through the work of GITEP

We continue to be a lead partner with GITEP for recruitment. For 2024 –25 we interviewed 23 potential candidates and had over 50 applications for teacher training which were processed. This coming year we will be the lead in recruiting trainees that apply to Balcarras TSH and to GITEP and then recommend to GITEP to also offer a placement. To manage this additional capacity subject mentors might be involved in recruitment as well as KCP and AJB.

In September 2025 we also hosted 8 trainees for the ITAP 1 week on Behaviour Management and High Expectations. We will again host a group of trainees for the ITAP 2 week on SEND in November as we did in the Autumn of 2024.

We have 6 trainees with us this term. Last year we successfully trained 11 trainees over the year.

3. Achievement

We want our pupils to achieve well at both GCSE and A level so that doors are opened to them beyond the school.

Our aims are:

- Progress 8 in top 5% of all schools nationally.

The 2025 GCSE cohort did not have Key Stage 2 assessment data and as such no national Progress 8 figure will be published. The school had pupils sit CAT4 assessments and these have been used as a base line to try and give an indication of progress. There are 2 sources of information we have used to give an idea of progress ALPS and FFT. ALPS put the progress of the cohort at an ALPS score of 2. This puts the school in the top 10% of school nationally. FFT place the school in the 12th percentile. These are not in the top 5% of schools but based on the cohort we were happy with here progress. The school continues to look for progress scores in the top 5% nationally.

- A8 at 6.1 or above.

The cohort achieved an A8 of 5.9. This is below the ambitious target set. The CAT4 data for this cohort indicated they had a lower prior attainment than the majority of cohorts the school has worked with recently. 6.1 remain the target for the 2026 cohort and the school will work to meet this.

- 5+ English and Maths at 80% (top 50 comprehensive schools nationally)

The 2025 GCSE cohort achieved 67% grade 5+ in English and maths. This is lower than the target of 80%. Based on the CAT4 base line testing of the cohort the value achieved is in line with our expectations. The school remains ambitious and will continue to have 80 as its target.

Strong Progress in the following areas:

Again it should be noted that all progress data for the 2025 GCSE cohort is based on CAT4 data and no national figures can or will be published

- Low PA

The 2025 LPA achieved an ALPS score of 2 (top 10%) and an FFT Progress 8 figure of 1.2.

- Mid PA

The 2025 MPA achieved an ALPS score of 2 (top 10%) and an FFT Progress 8 figure of 0.48.

- High PA

The 2025 HPA achieved an ALPS score of 2 (top 10%) and an FFT Progress 8 figure of 0.4.

This shows that all groups of prior attainers are making strong progress and the school continues to offer a curriculum and teaching that allows all pupils to thrive.

- EHCP

The 2025 EHCP pupils achieved an ALPS score of 2 (top 10%) and a FFT Progress 8 figure of 0.09. It should be noted that year on year the national progress data for this cohort shows a negative value.

- SEN

The 2025 SEN Support pupils achieved an ALPS score of 3 (top 25%) and a FFT Progress 8 figure of 0.13. Having these values positive is testament to the working of the individual learning department.

- EAL

The 2025 EAL pupils who we had CAT4 data on achieved an ALPS score of 2 (top 10%). This indicates EAL pupils are making the same progress in the school as non EAL pupils.

- Disadvantaged/Pupil Premium

The 2025 disadvantaged pupils achieved an ALPS score of 2 (top 10%) and an FFT progress 8 score of 0.32. While this score is lower than for our pupils overall (0.55) it should be noted how strong this is in comparison with national figures which year on year sit at around -0.56.

- Boys/Girls

The 2025 female pupils have an ALPS score of 2 while the males have a score of 3. The FFT Progress 8 figure for the girls is 0.73 while for boys it is 0.41. Differences can be cohort specific, and we have seen this type of difference in the past that then does not appear in the next year. It is however important that we do all we can to support male pupils in achieving their best.

Continued Development of English to Ensure strong outcomes for all pupils

Work with the English department to improve progress outcomes in line with those in the other core departments.

- Male progress 8 outcomes for the English element to be above those for all pupils nationally.
- Male progress 8 outcomes for the English element to be closer to the female outcomes in Balcarras.

This year there is no national progress data and so it is difficult to compare progress of male and female pupils. However, the school has used CAT4 data and ALPS to give an indication of progress. In English literature females have an ALPS score of 2 while males have a score of 5. In English language females have a score of 3 while males have a score of 5. This indicates that continued work on support boys outcomes in English is needed.

At Level 3 we want:

- A level 70%+ A to B
- ALPS 3 or better
- Vocational performance to be strong
- Strong Destinations Data
- High take up to Russell Group/Oxbridge/Degree Apprenticeship

In 2024-25 A-Level outcomes were agonisingly close to our overall aspirational targets: 69% A*-B, and ALPS 4. Within this, several high-recruiting subjects surpassed this target:

- Chemistry – 71% A*-B
- Computer Science – 89% A*-B
- Further Maths – 78% A*-B

- Geography – 76% A*-B
- Maths – 71% A*-B
- Physics – 79% A*-B
- Product Design – 90% A*-B

The 2024-25 Year 13 cohort of 218 students is the largest cadre to graduate from Balcarras Sixth Form in its history.

From an ALPS perspective, strong student academic performance was seen across core STEM subjects in particular: Maths and Further Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science and Product Design in particular. Similarly strong student performance was seen across the expressive arts subjects – Art and Photography especially.

Student performance in L3 vocational subjects remained strong, with the average student grade attained across Food Nutrition & Science and Health & Social Care being a Distinction.

Very strong post-18 destinations outcomes were achieved by our graduating students: 189 students from a cohort of 218 secured their UCAS offers – 92% of our Year 13 applicants. Of these, 169 secured their Firm UCAS courses, 3 of these being at Oxbridge colleges, and 2 Medicine courses. Students securing courses offered by Russell Group universities increased substantially – 111 places were secured at Russell Group institutions, 59% of all applicants. This academic year also saw a sustained pattern of Year 13 students pursuing both UCAS pathways, and apprenticeship routes too, with 3 students securing Degree Apprenticeships, and 7 securing Higher Apprenticeships.

4. Leadership

As laid out in the context section there are plenty of headwinds. Here are our priorities as a leadership team:

- Funding continues to be an issue—more with less

As we start 2025 we have reduced the staffing by over 2,5 FTE in teaching and 5 FTE in support staff. The funding we receive continues to reduce in real terms. For example the governments changes to national insurance cost the school well over £100,000 but the grant we were promised would cover the cost was £70,000.

- Continue to attract a comprehensive intake into the school—important that we don't take the school's reputation for granted

We continue to prioritise open week and really work hard to market the school. This year Kirsty McWhirter and Jess Leighton took on responsibility for open week and did a great job. We also continue to operate a huge number of tours. If people want to visit Balcarras we never turn them away. We have also conducted a full review of the website and updated in a number of key regards. We have introduced a Videos page and we have also tried even harder to make sure that the news page is up to date. In September 2025 there were 31 news articles on the school website. See data above regarding comprehensive intake.

- Advocates for inclusion—as the funding around high needs evaporates it is even more important that we advocate for inclusion at a senior level

We continue to position Balcarras as a warm and inclusive school. We currently have 37 EHCPs with 9 joining into Year 7. There are some serious issues around funding for children with SEND but we continue to do what we can with the resource we are given. We are proud of Balcarras' record regarding Fair Access. We currently have three children who were permanently excluded from other schools. Two of them are positively thriving at Balcarras. The third has a chance of completing her education here, despite the fact that we are her third secondary school.

- Senior Team Development—lots of us have been doing the job for some time! It is important that we continue to be outward facing. We should continue to review changes made this year with the creation of three Associate Assistant Heads

The senior team is working ever so well. We continue to keep it under review.

- Middle Leadership Development—strong middle leadership is the single most important factor behind our success. We should continue to invest in it and to provide opportunities for middle leaders to grow professionally

In January 2025 RJA ran a course for all staff but many middle leaders did attend on how to have difficult conversations – mainly based on Sophie Gill’s book.

The total number of teachers and leaders having undertaken an NPQ now stands at 27.

AGS and ASW have just completed NPQLT, KTA is undertaking NPQLTD, SW passed her NPQSL and LEF passed LBC.

- Sixth Form—continue to ensure that quality is not reduced as the size of the sixth form grows

This is one of the most challenging targets we have set ourselves, especially as the size of the student cohort remains well above 400, whilst the size of the Sixth Form leadership team remains compact. The good news is that the evidence suggests we are doing very well. Last year we achieved our second highest performance ever at A level (69% A to B) despite the fact that it was our largest ever cohort to date - 218. The 2025-26 Year 13 cohort is bigger again, and comprises of 238 students. Underlying the sustained academic performance in the Sixth Form is very strong and consistent pastoral leadership and interventions, indicated in the high levels of student attendance and engagement, and very rare instances of poor conduct.

- Community engagement—during the course of the last plan we developed our relationship with the Parish Council. We should deepen and embed these links

We continue to be represented on the Parish’s working party on Youth. The Parish Council representative visits Balcarras regularly. For the third year running we will host a tea party for the OAPs of the village.

- Strong relationship with parents—during the course of the last plan we re-invented our systems for parental liaison. We should continue to keep them under review

We currently have both a parent survey annually and parent forums in Key Stage 3, 4 and 5. These allow us to gain feedback from parents and inform discussions the management team have around key issues. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and the results of the parent survey are published each year and discussed with the governors. During our most recent survey 97% of parents said they would recommend Balcarras. That figure was replicated when OFSTED conducted their survey during the March 2025 inspection.

- System Leadership—we want Balcarras to play a key role in system leadership through the following:

- The Balcarras Teaching School Hub
- GLOW Maths
- The Gloucestershire Initial Teacher Education Partnership
- Being proactive members of the Balcarras Trust

The Balcarras Teaching School Hub has enjoyed another highly successful year, with a stable and experienced team continuing to drive improvement in teacher development across the region. Our strong partnership with the Odyssey Teaching School Hub at Pate’s Grammar School has further strengthened our impact.

Early Career Framework (ECF)

We continued to deliver the full ECF induction programme for early career teachers in Years 1 and 2. This included a blend of webinars, mentor conferences, and induction tutor training. Working with UCL as our lead provider, we supported nearly 200 ECTs and 100 mentors through a programme of in-person and online professional learning. As an Appropriate Body, we successfully supported over 70 ECTs in completing their statutory induction during the 2024–25 academic year.

National Professional Qualifications (NPQs)

Despite a reduction in DfE funding for schools, we successfully delivered a full suite of NPQs, with healthy uptake in both the autumn and spring cohorts. Notably, the GLOW Maths team led delivery of the new NPQ in Leading Primary Maths and were selected to facilitate the national online programme—an endorsement of their expertise. We also held our first joint NPQ Consolidation Conference for senior and middle leaders, which was extremely well received.

Initial Teacher Training and Recruitment

We maintained strategic partnerships with the University of Gloucestershire and GITEP, supporting teacher recruitment for the coming year. A significant development was the launch of the first Gloucestershire “Get into Teaching” event, aimed at promoting the benefits of a teaching career within the county.

Professional Learning and System Leadership

Throughout the year, the Hub led a wide range of CPD and research-informed professional learning events, including conferences, celebration evenings, and webinars. These initiatives have strengthened collaboration, innovation, and leadership across schools in the region. We continue to work closely with the Research School, the Maths Hub, and the DfE’s new RISE teams focused on driving school improvement

GLOW Maths Hub

At GLOW, we believe all children can achieve in maths – no matter what their background, experience, or individual needs. Established in 2014, the GLOW Maths Hub is part of the national Maths Hubs Programme and is one of forty Maths Hubs across England. It offers expert maths support to over 600 schools in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire through a range of professional development and bespoke projects. Schools engage with GLOW on an entirely voluntary basis and, since its inception, the hub has worked with 95% of all Gloucestershire and 88% of all Worcestershire schools. Last year, 394 eligible schools took part in one or more hub projects, an increase from 347 in 2023/24. A core element of the hub’s offer is its Teaching for Mastery (TfM) programme and GLOW is currently exceeding national targets in this area - achieving 80% engagement of Primary schools (vs 75% target) and 83% of Secondary schools (vs 65% target).

In 2024-25, GLOW has continued to support schools through a new programme of ‘enhanced and intensive support’, working with the DfE and RISE teams to address national (DfE) priorities. In doing so, the hub has pioneered innovative collaborations with several Multi-Academy Trusts to deliver Trust-wide targeted support that is empowering leaders and teachers at all levels within their Trusts. GLOW also continues to support the Balcarras Teaching School Hub by delivering its National Professional Qualification (NPQ) for Leading Primary Mathematics. GLOW’s Senior Leadership Link, Steve Lomax, and Maths Hub Lead, Ed Neale, play leading roles in shaping the content, materials and delivery of the NPQ, in collaboration with University College London (UCL) – the team responsible for designing the programme.

GLOW Maths Hub is fully funded by the Department of Education (DofE) and consistently operates effectively within its allocated budget, delivering strong value for money. In the financial year 2023/24, the Hub reported an underspend of just 2%.

Gloucestershire Initial Teacher Education Partnership (GITEP)

Balcarras continues to be the Lead School for the Gloucestershire Initial Teacher Education Partnership (GITEP) which is a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) provider in Gloucestershire. Over 30 secondary schools and several primary schools support the work on GITEP which has been training teachers since 1997. Dominic Burke Chairs the Partnership Board which oversees the work of GITEP. The SCITT continues to work in partnership with the University of Bristol. In 2024-25 GITEP trained 71 teachers, the vast majority of whom are being retained as Early Career Teachers (ECTs) by schools inside the county. For 2025-26 we have over 80 trainees enrolled. Balcarras continues to play a key role in leading GITEP and helping to ensure that we have a ready source of highly skilled and well trained ECTs coming into the county.

Work inside the Trust

Last year we provided bespoke support to a fellow Trust school in business studies and to another trust school in science. This year our staff are playing a full role in the development of three new key working parties across the Trust into inclusion, staff development and enrichment. Our Head, Dominic Burke, is Chairing the committee on enrichment. Our HODs are also members of the subject networks.

Other outreach work

Last year we hosted the headteachers of the Roseland Academy Trust in Cornwall. They were seeking out best practice and we designed a whole day for their trust senior leaders. We also hosted a visit from Lynch Hill Academy. In addition we hosted many visits at departmental level.

We were active members in the 'Beyond Outstanding' network of schools and continue to be active members on the Gloucestershire Education Forum.

5. Behaviour and values

We want behaviour to continue to be strong in the school. We have created a very positive culture around behaviour year on year. We want the culture to be 'relaxed' and 'purposeful' so that, in a way, good behaviour and self-regulation is just seen as the norm. We must always remember that what we do in a positive sense, in welcoming pupils into the school and creating opportunities for them to thrive, will affect the overall culture in the school. Our approach to behaviour must not be seen as negative. In fact we want 95%+ of our interactions to be entirely positive.

How will we know if we are being successful?

- High levels of attendance
- High levels of engagement in extra-curricular—regular survey
- Low levels of suspension (20% of county average)
- Very low levels of Permanent Exclusion
- Low level of behaviour referral

We should continue to prioritise the importance of the school canteen. Ensuring that children have access to high quality food at as low a price as possible is vital to ensuring that they are successful academically and that they are healthy.

Behaviour

In 2024-2025, the total suspensions were:

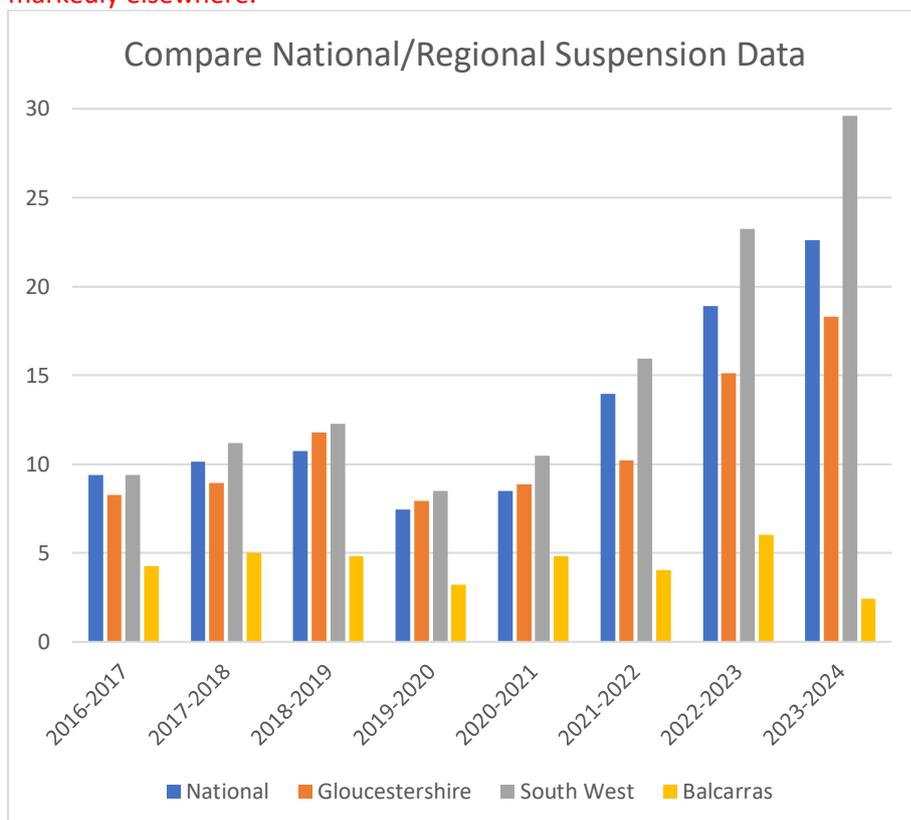
Boys Days	Girls Days	Total Days	Boys Suspensions	Girls Suspensions	Total Suspensions
49	22.5	71.5	31	14	45

This is slightly up on the previous year (24 in total), which was our lowest ever, but very much in line with the last 5 years. Compared to national and county averages it is extremely low.

	National Suspension Rate	Gloucestershire Suspension Rate	Balcarras Suspension Rate
2022-2023	18.90	15.12	6.006
2023-2024	22.61	18.30	2.412
2024-2025	unknown	unknown	4.620

The year has started very well. A new set of Behaviour Expectations was launched at the start of the year. This is a new concept for Balcarras. In the past we have always allowed teachers to set their own classroom rules, but it was felt a more consistent set of behaviour values was a good idea. So far, the atmosphere in the school has been calm and well behaved.

The table below compares Balcarras’ use of suspension to local, regional and national averages from 2016-17 to 2023-24. Balcarras’ suspension rate has remained fairly flat whilst rates have increased markedly elsewhere.



Our rate of permanent exclusion continues to be very low. 12 of the last 13 school years have been PEX free. We did two PEX in 2017-18.

Our levels of internal suspension are also very low. Last year we had 17 internal suspensions:

Year Group	Number
Year 7	3
Year 8	2
Year 9	2
Year 10	7
Year 11	3
Year 12	0
Year 13	0

Our school canteen continues to be very popular. Last year was another record one in terms of takings and the month of September 2025-26 was also a record.

We have changed how lunch time duty operates for 2025-26. The Senior Management Team now all have duties in fixed locations. The system is working well.

6. Attendance

Before the pandemic we had achieved attendance above 97%. We want to do this again whilst also reducing persistent absence below 8%.

We will continue to develop our strategies to encourage high attendance through rewards and ensuring that it stays high profile.

Equally we have made significant strides in developing our support for pupils for whom attendance has become a challenge through our EWO service and the House teams. There is strong evidence that this bespoke work improved our attendance outcomes in 2023-24 and we want to build on this success through the course of this plan.

Attendance

Overall attendance rates were very positive:

	2016/ 17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/2 1	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Balcarras Absence Rate	3.3	3.4	2.9	3.3	3.3	5.2	5.6	4.7	5
FFT Absence Rate							9.3	9.2	8.6
Balcarras persiste nt Absence Rate	5.9	5.9	4.3	8.7	12.4	8.6	10.5	9.9	9.9

FFT National Persistent Absence Rate							28.00	27.00	17.79
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A new set of strategies for punctuality was launched with tutors in September. This was launched with staff alongside training on how tutors can monitor “Lates” in their tutor groups. It is still very early in the year, but so far so good. On 22nd September the current attendance for the academic year is 97.7% (Yrs 7-11). The test will be when the winter colds all kick in.

Our EWO, Rosalind, is a very effective behaviour champion. Her work with some of our lowest attenders has been excellent and continues to have a very positive impact on the pupils with whom she works, and especially the families with whom she works.

7. Preparation for next steps

It is crucial that we continue to make careers education high profile in the school. We want to ensure that we are 100% compliant with the Gatsby Benchmarks

We are achieving 100% 7 of the 8 benchmarks and working towards benchmark 8 to give each year 12 /13 student the opportunity of having a personal guidance session.

Gatsby Benchmark	Your result 	% schools fully achieving this Benchmark nationally
1 - A stable careers programme	✓	69.2%
2 - Learning from careers and labour information	✓	84.7%
3 - Addressing the needs of each pupil	✓	62%
4 - Linking curriculum learning to careers	✓	81.7%
5 - Encounters with employers and employees	✓	86.8%
6 - Experiences of workplaces	✓	74.3%
7 - Encounters with further and higher education	✓	59.9%
8 - Personal guidance	In progress - 87%	77.4%

Achievements 2025

- Careers presence growing throughout the school – Careers newsletters / Job of the week along side up to date LMI information (All Gemma’s work) – this is shared with HSL
- Successful year 10 Work Experience Week– use of Unifrog for the first time to manage placements
- CV Workshops and Practice interviews, regular speaker sessions
- New Alumni Pages on 6th form section of website – work in progress
- First Alumni PSHE Event – 14th May 25
- Mentoring continues to be beneficial to students nominated by HOH
- Various careers engagement Student visits to Kohler Mira and GE

We want 100% destinations data at both post 16 and post 18.

This data is actually very difficult to track and is only published two years after a year group has left. We believe Year 11 had 100% destinations data. Sixth Form destinations data was very strong.

But preparation for next steps is not just about having a strong careers provision. It is about the development of confident young people happy in themselves. In this sense our work in this area feeds into section 8.

8. Opportunities to thrive

We want Enjoyment to be at the core of what we do:

- Lively and engaging teaching (linked to section 2)
- Extra-Curricular offer—something for everyone. We will continue to benchmark this
- Continue to actively encourage extra-curricular work amongst the school staff—we must value it and celebrate those members of staff who volunteer their time
- Agency and Advocacy—creating opportunities for our pupils to shine and to grow in confidence. Opportunities for pupil voice and pupil leadership
- Particular outreach to those who are struggling to engage—careful monitoring of Pupil Premium pupils but also other pupils who do not engage for whatever reason

In January 2025 we survey the pupils to look at extracurricular participation. Pupil uptake in extracurricular activities is very high. In 2024-2025 the uptake per year group was as follows:

Year 7 – 93.8%

Year 8 – 89.9%

Year 9 – 85.2%

Year 10 - 75.7%

Year 11 - 72.4%

All PP pupils who had not taken part in an enrichment activity were spoken to by tutors to identify barriers to participation.

In terms of agency and advocacy for the last two years pupils in Year 10 upwards have organised a Christmas tea party for OAPs from Charlton Kings. Our pupils continue to be active inside the Cheltenham Partnership. We have expanded the number of roles offered as part of the Year 11 leadership scheme. D of E continues to thrive now with over 100 pupils enrolled in Year 10 and over 40 in Year 12.

Our extra-curricular offer is strong. This year chess club has grown significantly so that it regularly has over 30 attending.

9. Inclusion and belonging

We want inclusion and belonging to be at the heart of everything we do.

SEND

We are proud of our provision for pupils with SEND. We will continue to be advocates for inclusive and adaptive education. We will keep SEND's profile high through regular INSET, staff meeting agendas and bespoke training through our 'lunch and learn' programme.

In 2024-2025 JMC and her team ran successful "lunch and learns" on a range of topics, including Tourette's and risk-taking behaviour and the teenage brain. INSET opportunities are provided to TAs

and they then feed this back to the rest of the department. SEND is a standing item at staff and curriculum meetings so that information can be shared to all staff.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Balcarras is a diverse community and we are proud of that diversity. We have recently appointed an Associate Assistant Head who has the promotion of EDI inside their brief. We want EDI to be high profile and intrinsic to the very nature of the school.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is now the first item we discuss at the Initial Staff Meeting on the first Friday of every year. MBC shares with the staff the diversity profile of Balcarras. We then reaffirm our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. Debbie Innis is visiting the school as part of a safeguarding research project. She delivered training on EDI to staff and governors recently and has offered the school some free consultancy in this regard.

Personal Development Curriculum

We have developed a strong PD curriculum which is fully mapped. Our PD lead has time to monitor the quality of our provision just as any other middle leader would. It will be important that we continue to adapt and flex the curriculum as we go forward.

HMD continually reviews the PD provision from Years 7-11. In 2024-2025 she introduced booklets for the Monday sessions which have been very effective. Evidence of their effectiveness has been gained through learning walks and work reviews conducted by HMD.

DL has fully revised the PD provision for Years 12 and 13, and the Sixth Form now has a fully established weekly PD programme which complements the extended PHSE sessions and Speaker schedule. The Sixth form team will continue to be reviewed and amended annually.

In 2024-2025 we conducted a SMSC audit to see where this was being met across the curriculum and through enrichment activities and whole school events. The Gloucestershire wellbeing survey also provides evidence that the PD programme is effective. Pupils in Years 8 and 10 will complete the survey in the summer term of the 2025-2026 academic year and a report will be published with our school findings. AJN will then share findings with SMT and governors at the start of 2026-2027. OFSTED were very impressed with the PD/SMSC provision across the school.

10.Safeguarding

In short, we want safeguarding to continue to be high profile and fit for purpose.

We will continue our practice of engaging an external review of safeguarding once every two years. The next will be in 2026-27

We should also continue to ensure that those who have oversight of safeguarding i.e. the DSL team have regular training but also receive the appropriate pastoral support.

The OFSTED inspection of March 2025 concluded that our arrangements for safeguarding are 'effective'. The informal feedback that we received was fulsome in its praise for the culture of safeguarding in the school. Strong pastoral care is the foundation stone for any school. The inspectors found a happy and safe school and commented on the "exemplary" pastoral care which is given to pupils. We were delighted that the inspectors praised the culture of respect in the school. They said that "pupils are highly courteous and respectful, towards one another, and with staff and visitors".

In June 2025 we were approached by Debbie Innis Turnill who is a former headteacher and now leads a safeguarding consultancy. She is studying for a PHD at Birmingham University. She asked if

she could use the school as a case study. She had visited several times previously and was very impressed by the culture of safeguarding in the school. We are hopeful that we will benefit from Debbie's insights and experience.

Reviewing the Plan

We will establish a committee of staff and governors to review the plan annually.

This first annual review was conducted in September and October 2025. Governors are invited to attend a meeting on October 16th 2025 at 4pm in the library.