

Update from the Head

A very Happy New year to you all. I hope you had a nice Christmas—it felt like a decent break. I spent time in Wales and in God's County. I enjoyed both. Back to it this week—there has been a very positive feel to the school although it has been very cold and wet.

Power Failure on Friday

We had an interesting start to the day today! I woke at 6 am to discover that the power was out at home and quickly learned that it was out at school as well. We communicated to parents that we might need to close or delay. Shortly after I arrived at school (6.50am) the power came back on so we made the decision to open. The power then went back off at around 8am which meant that we had to send a further communication out. The power came back shortly before 9am so we could confirm a 10am start. As I type this message I am keeping my fingers crossed that the power stays on!

It was a very difficult situation to manage because all of the things you usually use to communicate are disabled. By the time we arrived at school we had to set up a laptop and hot spot it to a phone. Thankfully there are people at Balcarras who understand this sort of thing! Anyway I apologise for the slightly disrupted start to the day.

Balcarras at 40!

As the bell tolled on New Year's Eve Balcarras entered its 40th year in existence. The school began its journey in September 1986 and was officially opened on November 12th 1986. We are planning a series of events to mark our 40th birthday including a big fundraising event in March. More details to follow.

Holly Wins Trust Bauble Competition



Before Christmas we revealed the winners of the Balcarras Christmas Bauble Competition. This year our sister schools, Winchcombe and The High School Leckhampton, also ran their own competition. This allowed for the possibility of a Trust Competition. Each school's winning entries were sent to Bernard Roberts (Chair of the Trust). He selected the overall winners. See article here:

<https://www.thebalarrastrust.co.uk/news/?pid=0&nid=1&storyid=30>

Congratulations to Holly Bodenham who emerged as the overall winner across the Trust.



Teaching School Hub Strategic Board

On Wednesday I attended the first strategic Board meeting of the Balcarras Teaching School Hub. It was a good meeting. If you are interested in our work as a Teaching School Hub please see article here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1375>

Visit to Pittville School

On Thursday I visited Pittville School to see how their new sports hall is coming along and to catch up with Richard Gilpin who is retiring this summer. Richard and I have worked very closely over the years and there is a great relationship between the two schools. I think he has done a superb job as head these past 16 years and I wish him well for the future.

UCAS Update

It is still busy season in the sixth form as we arrange UCAS applications. So far over 200 pupils have applied. Of the early entry applications 13 pupils have had Oxbridge interviews whilst 5 have so far been interviewed for medicine, veterinary or dentistry. There are still a few pupils waiting to hear. I would like to thank Mr Boughton for his sterling work preparing the submissions and good luck to all of our students who will begin to hear about offers.

Sixth Form Debating Season

Next week the Annual Debating season officially opens with the first debate on Tuesday. The motion is: *This house believes that the resurgence in vinyl is an overwhelmingly good thing for popular music in the 21st Century.* There will be two debates every week building up to the final in March. I love the debating competition and I can't wait for the first debate!

Sixth Form Open Evening

A reminder to parents with pupils in Year 11 that our Sixth Form Open Evening is next Thursday 15th January. All of the details are on the website here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1373>

It is always a busy evening for traffic and this year the situation will be compounded by the A40 closure. If you can arrive on foot please do. Beeches gate will be open.

PTFA Quiz & Comedy Night

Not long to go until the PTFA Quiz...which is on Friday 23rd January. If you have never been before it is a great evening. See article here for more details:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1387>

We also have an upcoming comedy night, again, all the information can be found on the same link.

Bikeability and Safe Cycling

Last term over 80 Year 8 pupils took part in the Bikeability course. My thanks to Mr Pearce for organising this. I'm on duty at the main gate most evenings and I have only on rare occasions had to speak to pupils who were not wearing helmets. However, as a Charlton Kings resident, I often see people cycling at night without lights. Of course, I've no idea whether they are Balcarras pupils or not but I would advise all parents to check that their youngsters are cycling with lights and with a helmet.

Right that's about it from me. Almost time for the weekend. I'm meeting up with my university pals again. This time we are heading to....Derby!

Have a nice weekend.

Dominic Burke

Message from Max Wilkinson MP...

I'm delighted to invite you to an Online Safety Evening on Thursday, 22 January, at Charlton Kings Junior School, East End Road, Cheltenham, GL53 8QE. Doors will open at 7.15pm for a 7.30pm start.

This event will provide practical advice on keeping children safe online and give you the chance to ask any questions you may have and share your own experiences. I'll be giving a view as your MP, and I'm pleased we will be joined by Ellen Roome MBE, whose experience campaigning in this area is a credit to our town.

Reserve your place [here](#).

If you have any questions, please contact my office at max.wilkinson.mp@parliament.uk or call 01242 383282.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Best wishes,

Max Wilkinson MP

Member of Parliament for Cheltenham

Dominic Burke