

Update from the Head

Another busy week flies by. Today we complete two weeks of Year 13 mock examinations. They have gone very well and I would like to congratulate the year group for their superb attitude throughout. This week also saw the end of UCAS applications. In total the school has supported 239 students in their application to UCAS this year. This includes several pupils who left Balcarras last summer and are enjoying a gap year. We also heard this week that 4 students have received offers to study at Oxford next year—congratulations to them.

Visit of Ben Williams

On Monday Ben Williams, who is head of All Saint's Academy visited Balcarras. We toured the school, had lunch and chatted about ways our schools can work together. Next Monday I am visiting All Saint's for a reciprocal visit. I love visiting other schools—you almost always pick up ideas or tips. There is a very good relationship between Cheltenham's secondary schools and later today I will represent Balcarras at the latest meeting of the Cheltenham Areas Secondary Heads.

CEP course

On Monday Balcarras hosted the Cheltenham Education Partnership's teacher education course, *Creating Cultures of Learning*, run by Simon Brooks. Simon is a teacher and educationalist who has written several books and is well known particularly in Australia. We were delighted that he was available to share his ideas with teachers from across Cheltenham. It's another good example of the collaboration that exists locally.

Look Who's Talking at CKJS

On Tuesday and Thursday Balcarras was involved in judging Charlton Kings Junior School's oracy competition, *Look Who's Talking*. I was one of the Guest judges both days alongside Reverend Paul from the Baptist Church and our very own Miss Niblett on Tuesday and Mrs Spring Wallis on Thursday. We listened to 6 two-minute talks each day by pupils in Year 3, 4, 5 and 6. It was very enjoyable and we were genuinely blown away by the confidence of the youngsters who stood up to speak in front of the whole school.

PTFA meeting and upcoming events

On Wednesday the PTFA met to plan their upcoming events. Please do support them if you can.

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>

The SMT team will be busy revising in the days ahead. We fully expect to reclaim our crown this year.

Sixth Form Open Evening

Wow it was chock-a-block on Thursday night and I don't remember seeing it any busier. It was lovely to welcome so many youngsters and their parents to the school and to talk about the opportunities on offer here. I think sixth form days are a golden period of your life and I urged the pupils to look forward to the next phase of their education after GCSE.

Thick Jumper Day

Today is Thick Jumper Day—I'm sporting a heavy green woollen knit that I loathe. I only wear it once a year. Anyway it's all in a good cause—we donate the proceeds to Water Aid. Mr Pearce ran a competition for the best Thick Jumper.

We also had an Empty Car Park Day today to encourage sustainability.



See article here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1397>

Balcajazz—save the date

Our time slot has been confirmed for Cheltenham Jazz Festival - **Saturday 2nd May, 1pm**

Right that it is it—time for the weekend. I am going to Leeds tomorrow morning to watch the Mighty Whites play Fulham. I am hopeful for our chances. MOT!

Dominic Burke

