

Update from the Head

Welcome to the latest update from Balcarras. It has been a very busy week at school with so much going on. Last night I attended the session on online safety organised by Max Wilkinson MP. It was very well attended - there must have been over 200 people in the hall. The keynote speaker at the event was Ellen Roome MBE. As many of you will know, Ellen's son Jools, who was a pupil here at Balcarras, died very tragically almost 4 years ago. Ellen has been campaigning tirelessly to change the law particularly around social media companies and their refusal to share the data they hold. Balcarras is full of admiration for Ellen and other bereaved parents who are campaigning in this area. Max gave a very concise summary of where the debate has got to in parliament. He is convinced that meaningful change is on the way. Thanks to all those Balcarras parents who supported the event. Most of all thanks to Ellen for speaking with great honesty and openness.

Cancer appeal

Before Christmas we received the heartbreaking news that our former pupil Zac Summers-Cameron had passed away. Zac was a pupil here from 2015 until 2022 and was hugely popular with both staff and his fellow pupils. His family are raising money for cancer charities in his memory. Please see article here and support them if you can:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1394>

Cheffing for the Chefs

Last Friday evening Mr Constance led a team of 6 staff who prepared a three-course meal for the catering staff of Balcarras, Winchcombe and The High School Leckhampton. It was our way of thanking our catering staff for the superb job they do looking after the pupils and staff in our schools. Mrs Watts provided a musical backdrop on the electric piano whilst the drama department converted the harsh lighting of the canteen into something more subtle and relaxing. Mr Constance chose Greek food as our theme although we decided not to smash the school's crockery!

Personal Development and Careers

On Wednesday we had the latest whole school Personal Development session. Year 11 focussed on careers and had a number of short talks from people in different jobs. I am grateful to the following people who came in to share their experiences.

Daniel Faundez – Simmons & Simmons Law

Mel Homewood – Gloucestershire University – Marketing

Rebecca Bound - Renishaw

Karina Smith-Reyes - Marketing

Hannah MacKenzie-Neville (Balcarras alumna)- Zoo biology animal rescue and rehab

Leo Daubeney (Balcarras alumnus) – Paramedic

Dan Tierney (Balcarras alumnus)- Royal Navy

Here is a photo of us alongside Jill Lewis (Balcarras Careers Lead) in the Careers Hub.



Years 7 to 11 had different themes during their personal development sessions and a number of outside speakers facilitated them.

Year 7 had a session on bullying

Year 8 focused on healthy lifestyles and also had a talk on sexting

Year 9 concentrated on self harm and body image

Year 10 had a session on mental health and also on coping with the stress of examinations

My thanks to Miss Davies for putting the programme together.

Great Debates this week



The sixth form debating competition is off to a superb start. So far we have had 3 debates. On Tuesday I went along to watch an incredibly strong debate on the two-party system in the United States. I couldn't attend the debate on Wednesday which was on the motion: this house believes that the media still perpetuates harmful stereotypes of women in 2025. Mr Leatherbarrow told me that it was such high quality that it would have made a worthy final. Well done to all those who have taken part so far. Here is a photo of Wednesday's debate. Each debate has been equally well attended.

Sporting Highlight of the week

There have been a lot of fixtures this week despite the weather. Mrs Thomson sent me this photo of the Year 7 girls football team who came from behind to win 2-1 at the Cotswold School. Well done to them.



PTFA Quiz

Tonight is the PTFA Quiz. I am very grateful to Simon Lewis who once again will be the quiz master and to the Balcarras PTFA who have organised everything else. The SMT team have been swatting up on areas that might crop up such as Shakespeare, capital cities and birds. I fully expect to tell you in next week's update that we won again! We'll see.

Now for the weekend. I'll be at the PTFA Quiz tonight, might go for a run tomorrow and then on Sunday will start worrying about how Leeds will do at the Hill Dickinson Stadium on Monday evening. Have a good one.

Dominic Burke