

Update from the Head

We have crossed over the halfway point of the school year. Today marks the end of the 20th school week—19 to go, not that I'm counting! I spent quite a bit of time this week just walking the school and chatting to pupils. I have to say they are such a friendly and polite group of young people. They are a real credit to you. We are proud of them and you should be too.

OFSTED Inspection of GITEP

I've also spent quite a lot of time talking to the 6 OFSTED inspectors who were here to inspect the Gloucestershire Initial Teacher Education Partnership (GITEP). They arrived at 10.15 on Monday and I went to meet them at the front gate. I even provided valet parking service for one inspector who was struggling with the tight parking spots we have at Balcarras. The inspection has gone very well. I am delighted because the future of GITEP and teacher training in the county is so crucial to the future success of Gloucestershire's schools including Balcarras.



Training the next generation of teachers is one of our top priorities. Here is a photo of GITEP's leadership team celebrating the result, from left to right: Chris Nicholas Director of Odyssey Teaching School Hub, Nat Roberts Secondary Programme Lead, Becky Rose Director of GITEP, Dominic Burke Chair of GITEP and Cariad Comfort Primary Programme Lead.

Pittville Headship Interviews

On Tuesday I went to Pittville School to be part of the selection process for their new headteacher. Richard Gilpin is retiring after 16 years of headship. It was a very interesting process. Balcarras has a superb relationship with Pittville School and I was very pleased to be able to support the governors in the selection process.

Sixth Form Applications

The applications for the Balcarras Sixth Form have been coming in thick and fast this week. It's not too late to apply...the deadline is 12 midnight today. See link here:

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

Sporting Highlight of the week

During my time as head Balcarras have appeared in 7 national finals—it is quite a rare thing. So huge congratulations are due to the Balcarras Boys Squash team who have made it through to the National Schools Squash Championships held at Edgbaston in March. To qualify they beat Bishop Wordsworth School from Salisbury (selective) and Kings School Taunton (private). See news article here:



<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1409>

Year 12 Parents Evening

My thanks to all those parents who came along to the Year 12 parents evening on Thursday. I chatted to quite a few and there seemed to be a very good atmosphere. Year 12 are a very nice bunch and they have generally settled in very well.

Message from the Careers Department



National Apprenticeship Week | 9–15 February 2026

Next week is National Apprenticeship Week it is a celebration of apprenticeships and the opportunities they create for young people to develop real skills, gain qualifications, and earn while they learn.

Throughout the week, we'll be highlighting how apprenticeships work, the wide range of industries they cover, and how they can provide a valuable alternative pathway to university or employment. Apprenticeships combine practical, hands-on

experience with structured learning, helping students build confidence, skills, and career prospects.

Find out more about apprenticeship pathways, levels, employers, and how to apply on our Careers pages:

🔗 <https://balcarras.fireflycloud.net/careers/apprenticeships/apprenticeship-week-2026>

or contact the careers team - Careers@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Mrs Jill Lewis & Mrs Gemma Towers

Art and Photography Trip

On Wednesday the A level Art and Photography Department had their annual trip to London visiting Tate Britain and the National Gallery.

House Languages

On Thursday we had the Annual House Languages Competition. I popped in towards the end and it looked like great fun. See news article here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1411>

Below is a photo of Mr Towers presenting the House Languages Cup to the Ottewell team.



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Environmental Health Officer Visit



This Wednesday we had our EHO inspection visit. An Environmental Health Officer (EHO) visit is an inspection to ensure a business complies with food safety and health and safety laws. Once again Mr Cole and his team achieved a 5 Star rating which is the highest you can achieve. Well done to them.

Bingo Evening

Tonight, the Young Enterprise Team are running a Bingo Evening. If you are interested in going there are still some tickets available:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1400>

Apparently, you can pay on the door.

School Funding



I am a member of the Gloucestershire Schools Forum so I receive all of the latest updates on school funding. I am afraid it is rarely good news. This week I received an update on the work of the F40 Campaign Group of which Gloucestershire is a member. I won't go into all of the detail here but the short and long of it is that we are badly underfunded in Gloucestershire. If you are interested please read an article that I have placed on the school website here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1412>

Education funding in this country is a postcode lottery. It is simply not right that there are such vast differences in education funding depending on where you live.

Anyway, I should cheer up because it is almost time for the weekend. I'm not dashing off to watch Leeds live tonight but instead will settle down in front of the telly. I do hope we play better than we did against Arsenal! I hope you all have a nice weekend.

Dominic Burke