

Update from the Head

Dear Parents

Welcome back to term four of the school year. I hope you had a nice half term. It has been a sombre start to the term here at Balcarras following the very upsetting news the school community received during half term. We have done everything we can to support our youngsters through the week and will continue to do so in the weeks ahead. Year 12 exams were postponed by one day but did start as per the timetable of Tuesday and I understand they are going well.

Thank you to Geoff Sparkes OBE



On Tuesday I invited Geoff Sparkes OBE into school. Geoff is retiring as a Trustee of the Balcarras Trust after 21 years' service as a Governor and Trustee here at Balcarras. I presented Geoff with a small gift from the school and thanked him for all he has done to support Balcarras and the Trust this past two decades. We are very fortunate to have had Geoff's wisdom and common sense to call upon over all these years. I wished him all the best for the future. He will attend his final Trust meeting in March.

Cheltenham Education Partnership Mars Rover Project

On Tuesday 5 Cheltenham Schools, Balcarras, All Saints, Cleeve, Dean Close and Cheltenham College, sent pupils to the first Mars Rover Event. The pupils involved seemed to have a great time. See article here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1423>



Year 8 Places of Worship Visit



On Tuesday the RE Department took a group of Year 8 pupils on a places of worship visit to Birmingham. They visited Guru Granth Sahib Gurdwara and Birmingham Cathedral. The other half of the year group will go in a few weeks. See article here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1421>

Year 11 Pupil Pursuit

On Wednesday I did my latest pupil pursuit. I followed the timetable of two pupils in Year 11 for the day. I really enjoy doing this—as a teacher myself it is a privilege to watch other people teach. As you might imagine the lessons were very much focussed on the forthcoming exams. We've always talked about getting the students to the line and I got a real sense that the teachers were picking up the pace. There was a lot of challenge in the lessons but plenty of support as well—the perfect combination. It was a great way to spend a morning.

Careers Leads Meet at Balcarras

On Wednesday afternoon the latest meeting of the Gloucestershire Secondary School Careers Leaders Network took place at Balcarras. Our very own Careers Lead Mrs Lewis hosted the meeting. I have always believed in collaboration between schools and I think it is a great thing that such a network exists.

GCSE Food Practical Exams



It has been a very busy few days in the Food Department as Year 11 completed their assessed practical activity. I popped in every lunchtime this week to see the finished articles—there were some great looking menus created. My thanks Mrs Saunders and Mrs Ford and many congratulations to the pupils for their outstanding work.

Visit of Esther Messinger

On Friday morning I welcomed Esther Messinger to Balcarras. Esther took over as Headteacher of Cirencester Deer Park in September. We toured the school and talked about the challenges of headship. I am doing a reciprocal visit to Deer Park later in the year.

School Improvement Partner Visit

Later on Friday I welcomed the Balcarras Trust's School Improvement Advisor, Julie Tridgell, and the CEO Helen Wood, to the school. We discussed our plans for the future and the ways in which Julie could support our work. Having access to such initiatives is a just another advantage of being part of a Trust.

Sporting Highlight of the Week

The Year 7 Girls Netball Team came second in the District Netball Tournament. They beat Pate's in the semi final before losing to Cheltenham College in the final. Well done to them.

So, time for the weekend. I'm popping to Anglesey—whatever you're doing I hope you have a nice time.

Dominic Burke