

Update from the Head



CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF BALCARRAS SCHOOL

It is a nice feeling to reach half term. It has only been a six-week term but it has been high energy and fast paced. I get the impression that everyone needs a bit of a break. At the start of the week I received the final version of our 40th Celebration logo which has been designed by Balcarras pupils. Doesn't it look nice.

Balcarras Runners Prosper in the Mud!



Last weekend 12 Balcarras runners competed in the Regional Cross Country Championships. Apparently, it was more like a mud run than a cross country!

In the Year 7 boys race Gloucestershire won the competition with Otto Davenport-Jones winning the event and he is now Regional Cross Country Champion. He was closely followed by Joe Bradshaw in second place and Charlie Neale who finished fourth out of over 60 runners, well done boys!! In the Inter Girls race Olivia Avery came 6th and in the Inter boys race Patrick Paul finished 4th.

Here is a photo of Joe Bradshaw, Otto Davenport-Jones, Charlie Neale and Lewis Shirlaw.

Look Who is Talking Judging

On Monday morning I was one of three Guest Judges at the Cheltenham Look Who is Talking competition. All of Cheltenham's 20 primary schools were represented and there were three heats to judge, Key Stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2 and Upper Key Stage 2. In all we listened to 50 youngsters speaking for 2 minutes on a topic of their choice. The standard was incredibly high and I have to say I enjoyed it tremendously. The winners now go on to the Gloucestershire finals.

RE Trip

On Monday the RE Department took about 80 Year 9 pupils on a trip to Gloucester. They visited Gloucester Cathedral and the Masjid E Noor Mosque. Apparently it was a great trip.

School Council

The School Council met on Monday this week. We discussed all sorts of things. I was particularly keen to hear pupils' views on mobile phones, social media and ways we could improve the school site. It was a very interesting meeting.

Year 11 Effort Challenge Assembly

On Monday Mr Towers hosted the latest Year 11 Effort Challenge Assembly. The Effort Challenge is a way we try to focus Year 11 in order to maximise their effort and commitment. At this assembly Mr Towers conducted a prize draw of 20 £10 prizes. Every week since Christmas teachers have been nominating pupils, commending them for their effort. There were hundreds of cards in the box—testament to the outstanding effort the Year 11s are showing. It was all good fun.

Year 11 Data Tracking

On a similar theme Mr Towers shared with the Senior Management Team our latest data tracking on Year 11. They are performing superbly and are on track to achieve excellent results.

Chess Team

Earlier this week the Balcarras Chess Team went to the Gloucestershire Championships held at Bristol Grammar School. There is an article on the school website here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1417>



Macbeth



On Tuesday Year 11 watched a live performance of Macbeth in the Main Hall delivered by the Box Clever theatre company. We have organised this for a number of years but I have never had the opportunity to watch. I did on Tuesday and I enjoyed enormously. It was a high energy performance, delivered in the round, and afterwards everyone was raving about it. My thanks to Miss Heather for arranging it.

Visit of Chris Healy

On Tuesday Chris Healy, who was headteacher here from 1996 to 2016 visited for a tour and a catch up. I always enjoy welcoming Chris back to the school. By coincidence his visit was ten years to the day since my interview for the headship—10th February 2016. We both remarked at how fast the time seems to have gone since. It was lovely to see him.



Year 8 Art Trip

On Thursday two coaches full of Balcarras Year 8 pupils set off for the Annual Art trip to Pitt Rivers. The other half of the year group will go in March. My thanks to the art department for organising.

Year 9 Pupil Pursuit and GCHQ Talk

On Wednesday I spent time observing Year 9 lessons. I enjoy the opportunity to get into classes and observe teaching. On the same day Year 9 had a talk from the outreach team at GCHQ. I went in to listen and it was very interesting. As well as giving the pupils a run down on how UK intelligence is organised, the speaker also spoke about careers in MFL. My thanks to Mr Seguin for organising it.

Cheltenham Education Partnership: Horrible Histories Masterclass



On Thursday evening we had the latest History Masterclass run by our very own Mr Stoker. Pupils from across Cheltenham came together to further explore Twentieth Century history.

Year 13 Intervention Eve

On Thursday evening, Mr Leatherbarrow and Mr Constance met with Year 13 parents to discuss ways in which we will continue to support pupils in the build up to Year 13 exams. My thanks to both for organising this.

Year 10 and 11 Parents Forum

My thanks to those parents who came along to the Year 10 and 11 Parents Forum this Thursday evening. It was hosted by Mr Towers and Mrs Ebanja. I am also grateful to Paul Meathrel who represented the governors. There are more parent forum opportunities coming up later in the year.

The High School Leckhampton: We Will Rock You!

On Thursday evening, I went to our sister school, THSL, to watch their production of We Will Rock You. It was excellent. Issac Costa Hall (Year 12) played the guitar in the band and Mr Armstrong assisted on the drums.



Sporting Highlights of the week

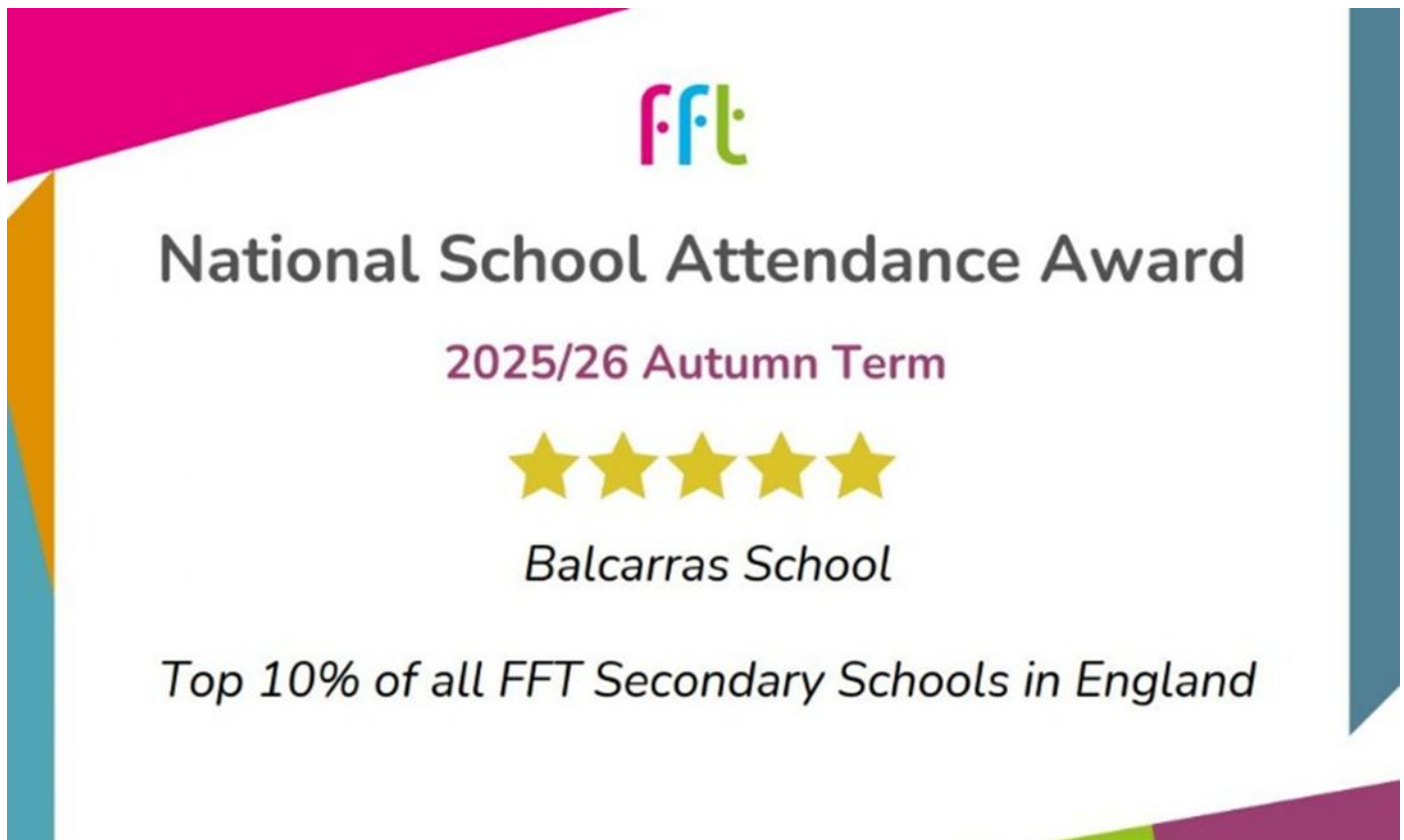
The Year 7 Girls team played superbly in achieving 3rd place at the Gloucestershire County Championships this week. Well done to them.



In other news the Key Stage 3 and 4 Boys Badminton teams came second in the County Championships on Thursday. The Key Stage 3 Girls also came second in their championships held on Wednesday. Well done to everyone involved.

More Attendance Awards for Balcarras

At the start of the week we received another 5 Star attendance award from FFT. Our attendance is currently at about 95%. Whilst that is good by national standards, I am still disappointed with it. I realise there has been a lot of illness around but I still feel we should be aiming higher.



Ski Trip

I'll be back at Balcarras at 4am Monday morning to join 8 staff and 48 pupils on the ski trip to Norway. I can't wait to hit the slopes!

Before then I'm heading to St Andrews to watch Leeds in the FA Cup. I really hope we win!

Whatever you are doing I hope you have a lovely half term.

Dominic Burke

