

Update from the Head



I can't tell you what a great feeling it is to reach Easter! Its been a lovely week—our birthday celebrations have begun and are detailed below. I'd like to thank the parent community for your generosity in supporting our fundraising efforts. I would also like to thank the PTFA who helped with this week's events and made a very generous donation to the school. To date we have raised £38,890 which leaves us agonisingly close to our target. But there are some monies which haven't yet been added and when they are I think we might have exceeded the target. More about the celebrations later in the update...

Staff Leavers

This Easter we say goodbye to two members of staff. Miss Kate Ball has taught drama here for the past 18 months and also co-directed our school production before Christmas. Mrs Elaine Shonbeck has worked in the Finance Office for over 10 years more latterly looking after the finances of our teaching school and maths hubs. We thank them both and wish them well for the future.

Gloucestershire Research School SEND Conference at Balcarras

On Monday Balcarras hosted the Gloucestershire Research School's conference on Special Educational Needs. We have a great relationship with the Research School which is based at the Gloucestershire Learning Alliance. The focus on SEND is timely because the government are proposing all sorts of change in this area.

Prefect Assembly

In 1961 at his inauguration President Kennedy said: "Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans." Well at Balcarras on Tuesday the torch was passed from one leadership group to another. The Year 11 House Captains were present to hand out prefect badges to their counterparts in Year 10 who now assume leadership of the student body in the lower school. I would like to congratulate those pupils who were appointed to House Prefect and Prefect positions and Senior positions.

Concert at the Town Hall

On Tuesday lunchtime our A level musicians gave a concert at the Cheltenham Town Hall. I wasn't able to go but apparently it was excellent.

Young Carers Event with CKJS



To round off the term, our Balcarras Young Carers group invited the Young Carers from Charlton Kings Junior School to come into school for biscuit decorating and Easter Egg hunting. It was a really successful event, masterminded by our group members to let the younger students know that there will be some additional support for them when they eventually join Balcarras. Everyone left for home with plenty of treats!

40th Anniversary Photograph

At the start of the week we took the whole school out on to the field for a special 40th photograph. My thanks to Dr Best who used Balcarras Drone 1 to take the photo:



The Big Tea Party

On Wednesday about 100 senior citizens joined us for the 'Big Tea Party'. There was tonnes of cake and gallons of Yorkshire Tea. Musical entertainment was provided by the pupils and we had a raffle which raised about £200. My thanks to all of the pupils who made cake and a particular thanks to Miss Dodds and Miss Leighton.



40th Anniversary Concert

On Wednesday evening we had the most lovely music concert in the main hall. I said a few words at the start and then Anya Hunter (Year 10) and I cut the very special birthday cake that Mrs Saunders had made for the occasion. We then all settled back for a wonderful mix of music performed by students, alumni and staff. It was lovely to welcome so many former staff back to the concert and I was also grateful to the governors who attended. It was truly a joyous occasion.



The concert was compered by Year 13 students Emily, Jem and Freddie. They were superb.

The World's Largest Tennis Table Game

About 100 pupils entered the Table Tennis game on Thursday lunchtime. I popped in at the end and it all looked like great fun.

Retro Lunch



The Balcarras Catering Service put on a special 1980s themed school dinner menu on Thursday. It featured toad in the hole which I just love. Yorkshire Pudding and sausage—what's not to like. Here is a nice photo of Mr Cole and Miss Sharpe:

Football Competition



Our week of celebrations wrapped up on Thursday afternoon with a football competition. 5 teams entered—2 staff teams, a seniors team from Charlton Kings Rovers and two youth teams from Charlton Kings which featured many Balcarras sixth formers and former pupils. It was closely fought but in the end the youngsters won through. Here is a photo of me presenting the trophy to Charlton Kings Rovers A.

House Match Results

It's been a busy week for House Sports this week. The results are on the website. Well done to everyone who took part.

INSET Day today

While the pupils will begin their holidays today the staff are in for the last full INSET day of the year. This one is given over to the school's academic departments to work independently.

Latest on Government Cuts to Education

If anyone was still under the illusion that education funding would improve under a Labour government then I'm afraid recent announcements must have finally dashed your hopes. Far from improving, the situation continues to get worse. The funding for the lower school will increase by 0.9% next year and for the sixth form by 0.5%. Wage

inflation looks likely to be somewhere between 3 to 4%, general price inflation above 3% and energy inflation—well that's anyone's guess. So our costs are rising faster than our income. You might be able to cope with this for a year or two but we have experienced this now for over a decade. There was a good article in schoolsweek this week about sixth form funding:

<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/were-not-magicians-sixth-forms-fury-over-cash-squeeze/>

And so to the holidays—I've always loved Easter—it is the season of new beginnings and as such is ripe with the promise of things yet to come. It's also a holiday where very often you do just get the chance to pause and reflect. I'm going to do some pausing and reflecting and then next weekend I am going to the Olympic Stadium in London where I hope Leeds will advance to a first FA Cup semi-final since I was a wee 10-year-old lad in 1987.

One final thought. We are ever so grateful for the many lovely comments that people left alongside their donations. Reading them really does mean a lot. <https://baccarras.hubbub.net/donor-wall/>

I hope you all have a lovely Easter.

Dominic Burke