

Update from the Head

We have reached May half term and it is a good feeling. It was very cold at the start of the week although it does now seem to be warming up in time for half term which is nice.

Water Bottles

Please do remind you child to bring a water bottle after May half term. After half term disposable cups will no longer be available in the canteen. The canteen will be selling re-usable bottles for £2.50. See website for details.

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1479>

Public Examinations

The exams continue to go well and so far we haven't had a hitch (touch wood!).

Geography Field Trip to Bristol



The Year 10 geographers spent Monday in the field—this time on a trip to the urban landscape of Bristol. See article here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1485>

Youth Choirs Silver Plate Winners 2026!

Mrs Watts emailed me with some wonderful news on Monday—the Balcarras Chamber Choir and Boys Cantabile Choir have been awarded the Youth Choirs Silver Plate for gaining the highest marks of any youth choir in this year's Festival! Their performance of Loch Lomond earned them a score of 91 which was the highest in the competition. We haven't had it presented yet, but we'll get everyone together for a photoshoot once it arrives at school. Congratulations to all of the singers and to the wonderful staff of the Balcarras music department. I was very proud to listen to them sing in the Town Hall and it is not a surprise to me that they have emerged victorious.

Inauguration of the Mayor of Cheltenham

On Monday evening I went to the inauguration of the new Mayor of Cheltenham, Martin Horwood. It was a lovely evening, and I was pleasantly surprised to see two Balcarras contributions to the ceremony. Poppy Davenport Jones in Year 9 performed a beautiful dance to 'Love You' and there was a wonderful singing performance by our former pupil Jess Abiona.

I couldn't help but feel a little sad that, depending on the decisions on the future of local government, this might be the last such ceremony. Cheltenham's first Mayor, William Nash Skillicorne was appointed in 1876—that's 150 years of history.

Buddy the Dog Wins a Certificate for his Charity Work

This week we received a certificate from the charity 2Wish to thank Balcarras for their donation of £924.64. These funds were raised by students celebrating Buddy's 3rd Birthday with a delicious lunchtime BBQ. 2wish support families and friends of people who have suffered sudden bereavement of child or young adult. We also supported this charity through our Sixth Form Dress Up Day earlier this year.

Curriculum Committee

On Tuesday evening we had the final Governors Curriculum Committee meeting of the year. The governors received the annual SEND Information Report and also looked at predictions for GCSE and A level performance in the summer.

GITEP

On Wednesday morning I chaired the latest Gloucestershire Initial Teacher Education Partnership (GITEP) Board meeting. So far, we have recruited 55 secondary trainees for next year. Recruitment into the profession continues to be a tough gig.

Last INSET of the Year

On Wednesday evening the staff met for our last training session of the year. Our theme was quality first teaching and we heard from several action research projects which have been active in the school. It was all very interesting.

Parents Forum

On Thursday evening we had our last parents forum of the year. Parents in Year 12 were invited in. We are very grateful to the four parents who came along. They were outnumbered by the staff in attendance but it actually made for a very useful meeting.

Year 10 Berlin Trip Departs

In the early hours of the morning the Year 10 Berlin trip departed bound for London City Airport. They will spend four days in Berlin seeing some of the historical sites and sampling the culture of this wonderful city.



Maths Challenge



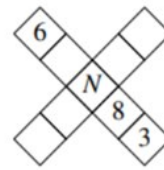
This year, 126 students from Year 7 and Year 8 took part in the Junior Maths Challenge. There is an article on the school website here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1488>

Why not have a go at the final two questions from the paper yourself? They are great fun!

24. The diagram shows nine squares arranged so that they form two lines, each consisting of five squares.

The squares are to be filled with the positive integers from 1 to 9 inclusive so that the totals of the five numbers in each line are equal. Three of the numbers have already been placed. What is the sum of the different values which the central number N can take?



- A 17 B 21 C 22 D 25 E 28

25. Four runners entered a race. We are told that at most two tied at the finish line (and were therefore given the same finishing position). How many possible finishing orders were there for the race?

- A 30 B 60 C 75 D 81 E 84

Key Stage Three Summer Production



Rehearsals for the KS3 summer production are well underway with 50 students from Yr7, 8 and 9 regularly rehearsing over lunchtimes and Fridays after school. Details about tickets to come and see the show, Grimm, will be shared after the half term holiday. See you there!

Latest Music Video Released

Today the music department have released their latest music video which features Jasmine Went playing Schubert's Impromptu Op. 90 No. 2 in E \flat Major. I think it might be the most accomplished piano performance I have ever heard from a Balcarras pupil—and that is saying something! Follow the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/@balcarrasmusic495/featured>

Former Pupils Receive Gold D of E from the Palace

At the weekend former Balcarras pupils received their Gold Award at a garden party at Buckingham Palace. Our very own Mr Johnson was in attendance. See article here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1489>

School's Arsenal Fans Celebrate

Today the Balcarras Arsenal Supporters Club met to celebrate Arsenal's triumph in the Premier League. They watched every goal that Arsenal scored this season. I did point out to them that's a lot of corners and many 'fouls'. Oh well...let's take the moral high ground...well done Arsenal! (*Gosh that hurt!*)



New Staff Photo of Buddy Released



Everyone who works at Balcarras has an official photo which is used on our management system and on the staff board in the staffroom. Mine is still the photograph that was taken when I joined the school in September 2007. I have never felt the need to update it but occasionally staff do. One such staff member is Buddy who felt that his original photo did not do him justice. He wanted a more arty and intense photo. He opted for this one...

And so to the sunshine of May half term—it looks like we are in for some golden days. Writing this reminded me of this lovely poem by the American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar:

"A Golden Day"

Paul Laurence Dunbar

I Found you and I lost you,
All on a gleaming day.
The day was filled with sunshine,
And the land was full of May.

A golden bird was singing
Its melody divine,
I found you and I loved you,
And all the world was mine.

I found you and I lost you,
All on a golden day,
But when I dream of you, dear,
It is always brimming May.

Isn't it lovely? Have a nice half term.

Dominic Burke