

Update from the Head

Dear Parents,

Today marks the end of week 38. Just one more to go! It has been a great week in school—activities week is a huge undertaking, but it is worth it. I would like to thank the staff who went on trips, visits and activities and a huge thankyou to Mrs Massey who organises the whole thing brilliantly. We'll try to find a few photos for next week's update.

PE Kit

A reminder that we will stick with the option of PE kit for next week—it's still likely to be very hot. I am going to be jolly cross if this weather breaks just as the holidays start!

Key Stage Three Production Brings the House Down!

My congratulations to everyone involved in this Year's Key Stage Three production. It was an absolute joy. 45 pupils were involved and they have been rehearsing for weeks. It was a superb performance with beautiful solos and some rousing choral numbers. The kids involved were just having a great time and there must have been an audience of 150+. My thanks to all those staff who came along. It was lovely that Year 5 pupils from CKJS came across as well to watch the dress rehearsal.



There is an article on the website here about it:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1518>

Great Year 6 Production at CKJS

On a similar theme...on Tuesday Mrs Watts, Mr Howell and I went to watch the Year 6 production of What's the Crime Mr Wolf? It was a joyful performance and as ever included the whole year group. Congratulations to all of the pupils involved and to Mr Gaston Nash and his team.

Expedition in Borneo

For the expedition teams in Borneo, they are hoping to keep a blog updated of their travels.

This can be found by clicking this link:

<https://borneo-blogs.base44.app/>

Sporting news

On 27th and 28th June, Isla (junior girls pentathlon), Rupert (junior boys pentathlon) and Bonnie (intermediate girls heptathlon), travelled to Yeovil for the SW Schools combined events championships, having been selected to represent Gloucestershire Schools.

All 3 performed very well achieving multiple pbs, and as well as competing as part of a Gloucestershire team, they all placed in the top 5 individually - Isla finishing 5th, Bonnie 4th and Rupert 2nd in their competitions. Bonnie and Rupert qualify to represent the SW at the English Schools Athletics National combined events finals in Bedford in September. Good luck.



English Schools Golf Championships

Well done to the Balcarras Golf Team who for the fourth year running went to the English Schools Championships at Woodhall Spa. Our Master of Golf Mr Perry accompanied them and he informs me that they all played superbly. We didn't win but we gave it a good go! There is an article on the school website if you are interested. Well done to Teddy, Artie and Barney.



Work experience



Along with several other members of staff, I have been doing work experience visits this week. I would like to place on record my thanks to every single employer in Cheltenham, and beyond, who were able to offer work experience placements. We are very grateful. The pupils have all had a great time and it has been very interesting to see them in a working environment.

It is not possible to mention every placement here but I did just want to mention one. On Wednesday I visited ITSA which is a charity that exists to provide computers to Africa. Balcarras has been supporting the charity for nearly twenty years. In that time we have donated 2,000 computers. ITSA would like to hear from anyone who has computers or IT equipment to donate. Here is a nice photo of me with Jenny Evans and Belinda Wilson from ITSA.

Here are a few more photos of our pupils on Work Experience.



Gold D of E

24 Year 12 pupils are in the Brecon Beacons doing their Gold D of E expedition this week. I received a very nice email from Mr Pearce saying that it was going very well despite the hot weather.

Balcarras is Going to the Movies – Message from Mr Davidson

Next Thursday (16th July) is the date of our now annual trip to the movies.

All Pupils in Years 7 to 10 are invited to attend. I am estimating around 810 (including 74 staff) will be arriving at **9.30 am** in the Cineworld precinct. Here pupils will be registered by their own tutors, then in year groups, they will calmly enter the cinema complex. Here they can pick up any confectionary before making their way, with their friends, to the film of their choice.

When the film finishes, we make our way on foot, via three parks to Charlton Kings arriving back at Balcarras just in time for lunch.

This year we are showing 5 different films in 8 separate cinemas. These are Supergirl, Toy Story 5, Moana, Minions and Monsters, and the Super Mario Galaxy Movie.

Pupils watching the films **do not come to school on that day** – we meet at the cinema.

If there are any problems eg pupils injured and unable to walk back, please inform me in advance so that we can take the appropriate action.

Key Points:

We meet at the cinema not at school.

Do not give your children a lift in the car (unless absolutely necessary) it has the potential to gridlock Cheltenham!

My email: igd@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Labour Market Troubles

In last week's update I referenced a report from SchoolDash which said that recruitment at secondary school level was at an all-time low. Next year is my 11th as Head. In my first 7 years Balcarras appointed 50 permanent teaching staff at an average of 7.14 per year. In the last four years we have appointed 10 at an average of 2.5 per year. Now it might well be the case that, as the labour market has seized up, fewer teachers are leaving. But it is also the case that austerity is forcing all schools to increase class sizes and increase the pupil teacher ratio. When I started ours was about 16:1. Today it stands at 18.6:1. This is a vast difference. In effect we are now running the school with 12 fewer teachers. This is a sector wide problem—we are not alone as the SchoolDash report makes clear. However, I don't think the severe cuts to education are getting anywhere near the attention they should be. I can't think of a more foolish government policy than the decision to reduce funding for education so drastically. The UK economy will pay a heavy price in years to come.

Anyway, I ought to stop talking like this because I'll probably get into trouble. Albert Einstein's famous quote is relevant here: 'If A is success in life, then $A = x + y + z$. Work is x, play is y and z is keeping your mouth shut.' I never was any good at algebra.

Come on England!



England v Norway on Saturday...I'm excited already. On Wednesday we raised the St George's flag on the main flagpole at Balcarras. It will fly now until England are eliminated. Let's hope its still flying on Monday 20th July!

Right, that's it from me. I'm looking forward to a cold fizzy drink this evening. Have a nice weekend.

Dominic Burke