

Update from the Head

Dear Parents,

Welcome back to another school year. I hope you had a lovely summer—for once we couldn't moan about the British weather! I spent time on the Jurassic Coast, enjoyed a wonderful city break in Berlin and visited Anglesey. It was just lovely to spend time with my family and of course I've also had the pleasure of watching Leeds United. We've made an OK start to the season and I am optimistic we might just make Europe. A club like Leeds should be in European competition every year.

It has been a great start to the new school year. I love the first few days of term—everyone seems happy to be back and there is just generally a feel-good factor around the school.

Exam success

The results days in August were both just brilliant. It was lovely to celebrate with pupils, staff and parents. At A level we achieved 67% A* to B, which will be amongst the highest scores for a comprehensive school in the southwest. The vast majority of pupils gained entry to their first-choice university, apprenticeship or job. A couple of days after the A level results we received notification from ALPS, which is the value-added results service most schools in the country use, that over the last three years our value-added score is ALPS 1. This means that over the last three years no school has outperformed Balcarras in terms of the progress made by students at A level. That really is some achievement. Well done to the pupils, staff and parents of Balcarras.

The GCSE results were also just stellar. 80% of pupils achieved a 5+ in English and maths. Last year this would have placed Balcarras comfortably inside the top 30 comprehensive schools in the country. When you consider that there are over 3,000 comprehensive schools in England this is quite something. We will see where we rank when the national results are published in November. Again, my congratulations to all of our wonderful Year 11 pupils.

New Year 7 and New Year 12

On Tuesday we welcomed our latest Year 7 recruits and a brand-new Year 12. Everyone looked fabulous in their pristine uniform and both year groups made a genuinely positive first impression. Here are some photos of Year 7 and Year 12 in the canteen.

On Wednesday I gave an assembly to each year group in the school. I urged them all to really take advantage of their education and to aim high. The new school year is ripe with promise but also provides the opportunity for a fresh start if one were needed.



Work over the summer

The site team have been busy over the summer building two new outside seating areas. They are not quite ready but we are hoping that they will be open by October half term. In addition to this they have also carried out decorating and maintenance jobs. The IT team have also been busy updating our computer system. My thanks to all these colleagues. I would also like to place on record my thank to those Balcarras staff who do vital work in the summer regarding exams results, data analysis and sixth form admissions - too many to mention but they know who they are!

GITEP

On Wednesday I gave a lecture to the new teacher trainees on the GITEP scheme which Balcarras helps to run. There are 75 secondary trainees and 16 primary trainees. My lecture was on professional standards. Balcarras is keen to continue to play a leading role in teacher training. As well as running sessions we also allow GITEP to host their seminars at Balcarras—for example the whole cohort attended Balcarras on Friday. I wish them well for their training year—they couldn't have picked a better profession.

Summer Success in the Cambridge Biology Challenge

Prior to the summer holidays 5 Year 12 students, Orla, Florence, Sianna, Sophie and Alice entered the Cambridge Biology Challenge, they had to submit an entry to the question *What skills are needed for success in biology?* Over 2000 students submitted an entry. The team entry was graded as Distinction, selected by the judging panel as a national Runner-up for the category Most original and also gained a badge of merit for their particular discussion on O-NSNN (Online Neuroplasticity Spiking neural networks).

We wish the team well for future entries!

Thank you to the PTFA

I wanted to thank everyone who attended the second-hand uniform sale this week as well as the PTFA who kindly gave up their time to run the event which raised over £500. Our final tally for Midsummer Music was over £12,000 which is a phenomenal amount!

Please do come along and support their next event which is the clothes swap event on Friday 16th October.

Reminder

Please can parents make sure Canteen cards are topped up, PE Kits are in school when required and Food tech ingredients are here when needed. Pupils are no longer allowed to use their phones in school so reception is very busy. This would be greatly appreciated.

Please could you also remind your youngsters to remember their cards. I was on duty in the canteen today and the number of pupils who did not have their cards really slowed up the service.

Meeting with Buddy the Dog

On Thursday I met with Buddy the Dog. We had a cup of tea together and discussed his timetable for the year. I got the impression that he was a little overwhelmed by the end.

BALCARRAS CLOTHES SWAP

FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2026
Put the date in your diary!

We will be holding another of our successful clothes swap evenings for ladies and secondary school age girls clothing.

Further details and ticket information to follow.

If you are having a clear out of clothing, put some items aside that you can donate to the event. Items can be dropped off in the week leading up to the event.



All proceeds go to the PTFA to support the school



OK that's it. We are back up and running and it's a good feeling. I'm going to Sheffield tomorrow to meet up with my university pals but of course I'll be keeping a close eye on events at the Amex Stadium as United take on the Seagulls.

Have a good weekend.

Dominic Burke

LIVING WELL
SUPPORT

Family Group





LONGFIELD
Community Hospice

**Thursdays
School Holidays**

Oct 29 / Dec 22 / Feb 18

10:00am - 12:00pm

Longfield Living Well Service
Burleigh Lane, Minchinhampton
Gloucestershire GL5 2PQ

Supporting families to connect

Is someone in your family living with a life-limiting condition or bereaved?

Bring along your family to our school holiday Family Group.

A welcoming space for all the family.
Enjoy craft activities, games, and nature.
Connect with others in a similar situation.



For more Information:
livingwell@longfield.org.uk
01453 733706

longfield.org.uk/family-group
Registered Charity Number 298627

 Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

Dominic Burke

