

GCSE: Preparing for success

Year 11

Name: _____



Balcarras
From strength to strength

The Virtual Learning Environment - VLE

The VLE is an online extension of the classroom, which can be accessed by students, parents and staff, and aims to share information and resources in a simple, clear and intuitive way. Any device which has internet access can view the site at the following address:

balcarras.fireflycloud.net

The system, called Firefly, allows the opportunity for personalised learning for students and the ability for them to become increasingly independent and responsible for their learning and self-organisation. It also enables parents and guardians to support them at home, by viewing their homework, resources and potentially see their progression through the school. This has been designed to be as simple and easy to navigate as possible. To log on, new parents should visit the site address, and activate their account, using the email address the school holds on record as part of your contact information. Current parents should have their children added to their account already.

In September, every new student will be allocated a username and password to access this site and this is their normal student network login. When logging in from outside of school, students must include the last part of their email address that follows their username (#####@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk).

There are also mobile apps available for both parents and students, which can be downloaded from the appropriate app store. These are called Firefly for Parents and Firefly for Students, and are free.

When logging in for the first time, the same username and password must be used and the school code: balcarras, to link successful with our system.

School Network

Pupils can access their school files from home, including both their personal Home Drive and the shared Pupil Resources folder, through OneDrive. To access these files:

- Use the OneDrive link at the top of the school website, or
- Go to the school's Virtual Learning Environment (Firefly) and follow the links.

Because these files are stored in the cloud, any changes made at home will automatically update—there's no need to email files back and forth or worry about different versions.

If your son or daughter needs help logging in, they should use their school email address (e.g. 1234@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk) and the password they use to login the school computers.

Online Safety

The school has a well-established ICT Code of Conduct. All pupils will be allowed access to the internet for school related activity. Anything not directly linked to schoolwork, such as playing or downloading games and accessing social media services is prohibited. Pupils who break the code of conduct, which is monitored by our network manager, will be sanctioned. This often includes having their network access revoked.

When outside of school, pupils should continue to use technology in a responsible manner. In particular, pupils should be mindful of how you use social media services, such as Instagram and TikTok. It is strongly recommended that pupils make their profiles private. Pupils should also carefully consider how they communicate with each other on these platforms as this is often the cause of friendship issues within groups.

We also recommend that parents monitor computer, smart phone and tablet use at home and that all parents read the schools advice on social media safeguarding which can be found on the school website: www.balcarras.co.uk / Our school /Safeguarding and Wellbeing / Social Media.

September 2026

Dear Member of Year 11,

The next few months will be the most important in your school career. In what will feel like an incredibly short amount of time you will be taking your GCSE exams and they will have a major impact on your future options.

One of the keys to exam success is having a revision strategy. Successful pupils will be well organised and highly skilled in revision techniques. The good news is that being effective at revision is something that can be learnt.

The aim of this booklet is to help you get organised, give you some tried and tested tips on revision and advise you on how to make the most of the opportunities you have. One of the most important things to do is plan your time effectively and the centre pages of this booklet set out the controlled assessments that will take place over the year to help you keep on track.

If you require any additional help or advice please speak to your teachers, who will be only too happy to help you and answer any questions.

The very best of luck.



Mr Gary Towers
Deputy Headteacher

Advice for Parents and Guardians

Making a difference: Helping your child prepare for their GCSEs

These tips will be more relevant when your child is in Year 11 but this is advance warning!

General things you can do to help

- Provide a quiet place for study.
- Encourage the rest of the family to help by not disturbing revision.
- Praise hard work.
- Emphasise the need for plenty of sleep.
- Encourage planned relaxation time (too much study is not helpful).
- Help your child to forget about each exam as it is finished.
- Remind your child that the exam period will soon be over and that there will be a good break from school when they will be able to catch up on what they have been missing!

Every department offers additional lunchtime and after school provision to help you achieve. You need to be pro-active in organising your commitments as some subjects may clash. If you have any concerns please contact your subject teacher.

Useful revision tips

You can help your child by helping them to follow these tips:

- Plan for half-hour sessions or an hour at most.
- In the evenings after school, plan to revise one or two subjects only. Leave some time for relaxation.
- Plan to revise specific topics in each subject, **not** everything at once.
- Ensure that each session starts with tackling the most difficult topics first.
- Encourage that all resources are at hand.

Exam Dates

All GCSE written exams take place between **Tuesday 11th May and Wednesday 23rd June 2027 (provisional dates)**.

There are no exams during the week of the May bank holiday, when schools are normally on half-term break. In 2027 this will be the week beginning Monday 31st May 2027.

Advice during the spring term

- Get your child to check that they have all notes and books for revision. Get them to talk to their teacher if they are missing any.
- Check that they have a revision timetable which includes the dates and times of the examinations in May and June. Include any important dates (such as birthdays) when you want them to take some time off from revision.
- Include in the timetable a plan for revision.
- Spread revision out evenly so that subject demands match to the exam timetable.

GCSE Contingency Day

Please be aware that students taking GCSE exams next summer need to be available up to and including the Contingency Day on **23rd June 2027**.

This date has been set by the exam boards in case of national or local disruption during the GCSE exam period.

During the exam period

- Try to ensure that:
- Your child gets a good night's sleep before exams.
- They have all the equipment for the day.
- They know the start times of each exam for the day and plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before.
- You wish them well and tell them that they have worked hard and that they can only do their best.

School Contacts

Keeping in touch with school can be extremely important when seeking advice in preparation for exams.

Listed are the names of staff who will help should any issues occur during the exam period.

Heads of Houses

Foley: Mrs Noble
Graveney: Mrs Winterbottom
Ottewell: Mr Amor
Selvey: Mrs Phelpstead

Examinations Officer

exams@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Head of SEND

Mrs Corinaldi

And when it's all over . . . tell your child to relax and forget about study for a while. Enjoy the summer break!

Organisation / Time Management

- Start early.
- Spend 'quality working time' in a quiet and organised environment.
- Plan each session with specific outcomes, decide what you are going to achieve from each activity - ask parents to monitor and reward you.
- Keep intensive time periods relatively short, eg divide up an hour into 5 minutes' planning, two 20 minute sections with 10 minutes for review. Then break and repeat.
- Use a variety of strategies and techniques to keep things fresh.
- Write things down on paper - you will remember them more clearly - summarise notes using headings.
- Learn and remember what you have written, then test to check.
- Invest in some highlighter pens and file dividers.
- Keep a balance between work and relaxation - reward good revision.
- Plan your timetable and stick to it.
- Try your best and develop confidence as you build up your knowledge.

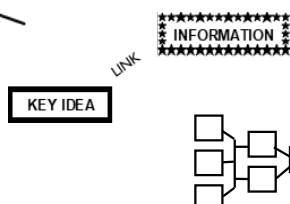
The countdown to your GCSE exams begins!



Your TEACHERS are a valuable resource.
Seek out the advice of your MENTORS.

Revision Strategies

- Brainstorming
- Concept mapping
- Flow diagrams
- Reduce information onto revision cards
- Convert text material into diagrams
- Focus on key terminology and concepts/ideas
- Test learning regularly - use each other - teamwork
- Begin with model answers - 'this is what I am aiming for'
- Draft answers before you begin
- Review and check answers 'what could I have included to make it better'
- Organise material logically
- Focus on areas of weakness - turn them into strengths.
- Look at past papers and mark schemes



KEY-WORD	DEFINITION	KEY-WORD	DEFINITION

Good Luck!



You must put these into effect NOW.
It is planned and systematic ACTION that delivers results, NOT talk of good intentions.

Art

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 40% exam / 60% coursework (Coursework runs through Year 10 and Year 11.)

Advice on revision: The art department feel that the best kind of support we can offer the GCSE students is that from September the art department will be running workshops and catch-up sessions for those students who would like to take advantage of extra studio time. All art students are welcome. The sessions will run on Tuesday afternoons until 5pm. (Check with your teacher.) Please feel free to take advantage of this extra tuition.

The department have also provided all art students with a week by week guide on how to achieve the best results with the preparation for the forthcoming mock examination.

Business Studies

Exam board: Eduqas

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

62.5% Theory Exam (no tiers) / 37.5% Data Response Exam (no tiers)

Advice on revision: Students are recommended to purchase a revision guide from Hodder Education which is specific to the Eduqas syllabus. Students will also be issued with a past paper booklet with the relevant mark scheme to help build key exam skills.

Computer Science

Exam board: OCR

Assessment Overview:

Paper 1 - Computer Systems - 1 hour 30 minutes – 50% of total grade

Paper 2 - Computational Thinking, Algorithms & Programming - 1 hour 30 minutes – 50% of total grade .

Advice on revision: In Year 11, the main focus shifts to preparing for Paper 2, which tests pupils' understanding of algorithms, computational thinking, and programming techniques. Lessons are designed to develop confidence in writing, tracing, and improving code, as well as applying logic and problem-solving skills.

However, pupils should also continue revising for Paper 1, which was the focus in Year 10. This paper includes key theory topics such as systems architecture, data representation, and computer networks. Our mock exams

are focused on Paper 1 content to encourage pupils to revisit and consolidate this knowledge early in the year.

Pupils should make regular use of the Computer Science VLE page, which includes past papers, mark schemes, topic videos, and lesson resources. The Next Steps section also offers stretch challenges and independent programming tasks to boost confidence and fluency in Python.

Creative iMedia

Exam board: OCR Cambridge Nationals

Assessment Overview:

R093: Creative iMedia in the Media Industry – Written Exam – 1 hour 30 minutes – 40% of total grade

R096: Digital Animation with Audio – Coursework – 35% of total grade

R094: (completed in Year 10) – 25% of total grade

Advice on revision: In Year 11, pupils complete their second major coursework project: R096 – Digital Animation with Audio. This unit involves planning, creating, and evaluating an animated product for a target audience. It builds on the digital media skills pupils developed during Year 10 and contributes 35% of the final grade.

Alongside this, pupils continue preparing for the R093 written exam, which covers topics such as media sectors and products, planning methods, and legal and ethical considerations. The mock exam focuses on the theory content taught so far, providing a useful opportunity to consolidate understanding in parallel with coursework.

Pupils should use the Creative iMedia VLE page as their main revision resource. It includes lesson materials, past papers, and topic videos. In addition, all pupils receive a booklet of example exam questions, which they should work through regularly to test their knowledge and build exam technique.

Design Technology: Product Design Route

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 50% exam / 50% coursework

Advice on revision: Specific D&T revision guides and workbooks are available from the design and technology department at a cost of £6.00. Students should see their D&T teacher if they wish to purchase one. Past papers are available from their D&T teacher on request. There are a number of revision resources available on the VLE, GCSE page.

Design Technology: Textiles Route

Exam board: Eduqas

Assessment Overview: 50% exam / 50% coursework

Advice on revision: Exam board specific revision books are available to purchase from the design and technology department at a cost of £8.00. In addition, students will be given a revision pack with past papers and worksheets before they break up for exam leave. The D&T Textiles page on the VLE is also full of lots of support materials for the NEA and the exam.

Design technology: Food preparation and nutrition

Exam board: Eduqas

Assessment Overview: 50% exam / 50% non exam assessment (two pieces completed in Year 11)

Advice on revision: All pupils have access to a digital textbook available to all students through the school's VLE. In addition, a revision guide will be provided and an additional revision guide and workbook can be purchased through school in Year 11. Students will be given many revision aids and help sheets and our VLE pages will provide numerous support materials, example questions and other useful resources.

Drama

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel.

Assessment Overview: 30% practical/ 70% written (one written exam worth 40% and a NEA portfolio worth 30%).

Advice on revision: The year begins with preparation for the scripted performances that take place in February (date TBC in the November of Year 11). For this unit students will perform both a group piece and a monologue - they will be externally examined, and this accounts for 20% of their final mark. During this period of time homework activities will include learning lines and attending extra-curricular rehearsals. After this we will begin preparations for the written exam. Students will be expected to attend a school trip to the theatre in order to write about this performance in their exam. We will also return to our study of An Inspector Calls (booklets provided). Students may find it helpful to buy the Revise Edexcel GCSE (9-1) Drama Revision Workbook ISBN 1292131977.

English Language

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

The GCSE English Language course culminates in two 1 hour 45 minute exams. The first of these will test students on their ability to analyse unseen literary fiction and will also require them to produce a short piece of creative writing; the second will test students on their ability to analyse unseen non-fiction and will also require them to produce a short piece of functional writing. Students will be taught English Language and English Literature separately and three lessons a fortnight in Y11 will be devoted to preparing for the English Language exam.

Advice on revision: Lessons in Y11 will be focused primarily on the reading elements of the exam mostly through practice past papers. The CPG GCSE English Language AQA Revision Guide for the 9-1 course is a useful guide to what is required:

<https://www.cgpbooks.co.uk/secondary-books/gcse/english/english-lang/enar41-gcse-english-language-aqa-revision>

English Literature

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

The GCSE English Literature course culminates in two exams: the first of these lasts for 1 hour and 45 minutes and will require students to answer questions on a Shakespeare play (Macbeth) and on a nineteenth century novel (A Christmas Carol); the second exam lasts for 2 hours and 15 minutes and will require students to answer questions on the play An Inspector Calls and on a range of 19th, 20th and 21st century poetry both seen and unseen.

Advice on revision: There are CPG revision guides available for all the texts that we study as well as a huge range of internet-based resources which can be accessed simply by searching the name of the text. In Y11, students will study Macbeth and will revise all of the texts done in Y10.

French

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Advice on revision: Most students will have purchased the Grammar and Translation workbook, and this will prove extremely useful when students wish to revise independently at home. In addition to the Grammar and Translation workbook, we would highly recommend that students purchase the Pearson Edexcel Revision workbook. This workbook offers a wide range of activities on the 4 skills to prepare the students for the final examination. Past papers are also available on the VLE. Further listening and reading activities will be available on the VLE in the French GCSE section.

Students should continue to use the <https://activehub.pearson.com/> website independently and/or completing tasks set by their teachers. Students will continue to find the following websites helpful: www.languagesonline.co.uk - grammar section www.linguascope.co.uk - intermediate vocabulary section.

Geography

Exam board: AQA Geography

Assessment Overview: 100% exam (3 papers)

Human and physical geography is taught across the course and assessed in papers 1 and 2. Paper 3 focusses on geographical applications so pupils will study a topical geographical issue and are also required to undertake two contrasting fieldwork experiences. Pupils conducted a field study on regeneration in Bristol and will conduct a river study to Blackpool Brook. In the spring of Year 11 there will also be a session to study the pre-release material on the topical geographical issue which is sent prior to the exam.

Advice on revision: There will be a range of textbooks used throughout the course as well as resources to supplement the teaching of the content. Pupils will also be given a specification sheet for each topic to act as a 'tick sheet' for what needs to be known for the exam. Pupils will be given a past paper question booklet for each topic to practice exam skills throughout the course. We recommend that pupils make flash cards of all key content as they progress through the course, and we also recommend the use of a revision website called Seneca Learn.

At the start of the academic year there will be an opportunity to purchase a range of resources to supplement pupils' notes and help with revision. In addition, in Year 11 the department will offer revision sessions to support pupils' preparation for their upcoming exams.

Health & Social Care

Exam board: OCR Cambridge National in Health & Social Care (2022)
Level 2

Assessment Overview: 40% exam / 60% NEA

Advice on revision: In Year 11 students will complete the final NEA unit (RO35) plus they will sit the final exam (RO32). To support them with the revision for this unit there are several revision guides available:

My Revision Notes: Level 1/Level 2 Cambridge National in Health & Social Care: Second Edition, ISBN: 9781398351240, 09/09/2022, 104 pages.

Level 1/Level 2 Cambridge National in Health and Social Care (J835) Exam Practice Workbook , ISBN: 9781398384873, Published: 25/08/2023, 72 pages.

Cambridge National in Health and Social Care Revision Guide and Workbook with Digital Access (2 Years): Level 1/Level 2, ISBN 1009159313, Published: 28/07/2022. 128 pages.

History

Exam board: AQA History (8145)

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Paper 1 - Germany 1890-1945/ The Cold War 1945-1972
(studied in Year 10)

Paper 2 - Elizabethan England 1568–1603. Migration, Empires and People, AD790- to the present day (studied in Year 11).

Advice on revision: Revision guides for the new GCSE (Grade 9-1) have been published that include all of the topics we study. The department have created revision guides and resources for both paper 1 and paper 2 topics and pupils will be given copies of these (also available on the VLE).

Pupils will also find useful materials on BBC Bitesize for Elizabeth, Germany, Conflict & Tension and the Migration topics. Pupils will also be directed to Seneca which covers all of our topics. Pupils and parents are advised to talk to the class teacher for any further advice on revision resources.

GCSE Exam and Coursework / Controlled Assessment

September	October	November	December	January
		All subjects Mock exams		
H&SC Continue working on RO35		English Literature Paper 2 (Trial exam)		H&SC Submission deadline for RO35. Begin exam unit RO32
Art Preparation for Year 11 Mock -booklet distributed		Art Mock exam		Art Exam given out
Music Non exam assessment: composition Composition 1 (free composition)		Music Non-exam assessment composition: Composition 1 (free composition)		Music Non-exam assessment composition: Composition 2 (brief to be set by exam board).
Physical Education Practical assessment continual moderation (external moderation April Year 11)		Non-exam assessment: Performing (as part of trial exams)		
	Food & nutrition Non-exam assessment Task 1 deadline	Food & nutrition Non-exam assessment 1. GCSE formal exam assessment during trial exam period - 3 hours	Food & nutrition NEA 1 completion Introduction to NEA 1 Task	Food & nutrition Non-exam assessment 2. This will include a 3 hr 30 mins practical.
Drama Scripted Performance Unit.				

February		March	April	May	June
Maths, English and Science Core mock exams	Maths and English Mock exams	Science Mock exams in lessons	All subjects Final GCSE exams		
	Russian, Spanish & French Scripted Performance for External Examiner	Russian, Spanish & French Speaking examinations			
DT: Product Design - Textiles Non-examined assessment deadline		Art Coursework and exam completed			
Music Non-exam assessment composition: Composition 2 (brief to be set by exam board)		Music Non-exam assessment: Performing (final) Early April (before Easter)			
Physical Education Coursework final deadline	Creative iMedia R096 Animation controlled assessment completed	Physical Education External moderation			
Food & nutrition Non-exam assessment 2. This will include a 3 hr 30 mins practical.					
Drama Scripted Performance for External Examiner					

Year 10 Timetable September 2026 - June 2027

Year 10 Timetable September 2026 - June 2027

Mathematics

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel

Assessment Overview: 100% exam. Three exam papers each 90 minutes long. One non-calculator paper and two calculator papers.

Foundation tier grades 1-5, Higher tier grades 4-9

Advice on revision: Pupils can use www.vle.mathswatch.com. Pupils should speak to their teacher for login information. We also recommend the Pearson target revision guides and the CGP practice exam papers. Both of which can be purchased from their maths teacher

Music

Exam board: WJEC Eduqas

Assessment Overview: 40% Appraising — exam / 30% Performing / 30% Composing

Advice on revision: Textbooks are available to borrow from the department and resources are uploaded on the VLE under Music GCSE. Two revision guides are currently available. The Illuminate Publishing Music Revision Guide by Jan Richards is made available to students in Year 11. A second WJEC & EDUQAS GCSE Music Revision Guide by David Ventura, published by Rhinegold Education, is available online if students wish to purchase their own copies. (Please note that the Listening Tests provided by the same publishers will be used in class and it is not necessary for students to purchase this.) Please note when looking at information online, it is **WJEC Eduqas** - there are differences from the WJEC Music course.

Religion, Philosophy & Ethics

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 100% exam. 1 hour 45 minutes hours Philosophy & Ethics / 1 hour 45 minutes Christian beliefs & practice and Buddhist philosophy, beliefs & practice.

Advice on revision: We are able to get revision guides for you at a discounted rate during the September of Year 11. These are the AQA Religious Studies A Christianity and Buddhism complete revision guide by Dawn Cox.

If you would like to buy any additional textbooks, the AQA Religious Studies A Christianity and Buddhism book by Fleming, Nagapriya and Smith is what we would recommend.

Physical Education

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 60% exam / 40% practical coursework

Advice on revision: Revision guides are available at £3 each from the sports hall office.

Additional support material available on the VLE under physical education, including links to GCSE Bitesize.

Russian

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Advice on revision: An extensive range of revision materials can be found on the Russian GCSE section of VLE. Here students can access the core vocabulary list, grammar notes and practice exercises. There are also past papers with mark schemes and an online version of our GCSE revision guide.

The following website may also be useful: <http://www.russianforeveryone.com/>

Science

Exam board: AQA Combined Science: Trilogy

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Advice on revision: Students have the opportunity to purchase a published CGP revision guide for the course in Year 10. This covers all the content from Year 9 to Year 11. In addition to this, students will be given a revision pack at Parent's evening with the same resources that are available on the VLE; they contain glossaries of key words, quiz questions, past paper questions and model answers. The course contains a number of 'required practicals' that need to be revised for the examinations in Year 11. Students will be given their required practical booklet after the completion of the final practical.

The Balcarras VLE contains the summary front sheets for each topic along with the resources used for each lesson. Students can access these if they miss a lesson or for revision.

Additionally, there is a 'GCSE Science revision' page on the VLE with lots of past papers and mark schemes. Other websites suitable for revision are as follows:

<https://app.senecalearning.com/login>

<https://www.physicsandmathstutor.com/>

<https://www.bbc.com/education/examspecs/z8r997h> <http://freesciencelessons.co.uk/>

<https://classroom.thenational.academy/subjects-by-key-stage/key-stage-4/subjects/combined-science> <https://cognitoedu.org>

The GCSE specification we follow can be found at the website below:

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/science/gcse/combined-science-trilogy-8464>

Spanish

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Advice on revision: Most students will have purchased the Grammar and Translation workbook, and this will prove extremely useful when students wish to revise independently at home. In addition to the Grammar and Translation workbook, we would highly recommend that pupils purchase the Pearson Edexcel Revision workbook. This workbook offers a wide range of activities on the 4 skills to prepare the students for the final examination. Past papers are also available on the VLE. Further listening and reading activities will be available on the VLE in the Spanish GCSE section.

Pupils should continue to use the <https://activehub.pearson.com/> website independently and/or completing tasks set by their teachers. Pupils will continue to find the following websites helpful: www.languagesonline.co.uk - grammar section www.linguascope.co.uk - intermediate vocabulary section.

w/c 4th January 2027 (Week 2)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 11th January 2027 (Week 1)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 18th January 2027 (Week 2)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 25th January 2027 (Week 1)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 1st February 2027 (Week 2)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 8th February 2027 (Week 1)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

Half Term Monday 15th - Friday 19th February 2027

w/c 22nd February 2027 (Week 2)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 1st March 2027 (Week 1)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 8th March 2027 (Week 2)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 15th March 2027 (Week 1)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 22nd March 2027 (Week 2)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			

Easter holidays
Thursday 25th March - Friday 9th April 2027

w/c 12th April 2027 (Week 1)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 19th April 2027 (Week 2)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 26th April 2027 (Week 1)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Bank Holiday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

w/c 3rd May 2027 (Week 2)

Day	Date	Lunchtime session	After school session
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

Curriculum-related questions

Should you have any curriculum-related questions, please contact the relevant Head of Department.

You can do so by emailing Balcarras School at admin@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk and requesting that your query be directed to the relevant Head of Department and your child's Head of House.

Departments	Heads of Departments
Art	Mr D Hazael
Business Studies	Mr L Perry
Computing	Mr S Cooper
DT: Product Design	Mrs J Swanepoel
DT: Food & Nutrition	Mrs C Saunders
DT: Textiles	Miss A Clements
Drama	Mrs H Wranosky
English	Miss Heather
Geography	Mrs A Searle
Health & Social Care	Mrs C Timpson
History	Mr M Stoker
Mathematics	Mr S Critchley
Modern Languages	Mr F Seguin
Music	Mr D Armstrong
Physical Education	Mr M Harvey
Philosophy & Ethics	Mrs H Ebanja
Science	Mr A Spring Wallis

The Virtual Learning Environment - VLE

The VLE is an online extension of the classroom, which can be accessed by pupils, parents and staff, and aims to share information and resources in a simple, clear and intuitive way. Any device which has internet access can view the site at the following address: balcarras.fireflycloud.net

The system, called Firefly, allows the opportunity for personalised learning for pupils and the ability for them to become increasingly independent and responsible for their learning and self-organisation. It also enables parents and guardians to support them at home, by viewing their homework, resources and potentially see their progression through the school.

To log on, new parents should visit the site address, and activate their account, using the email address the school holds on record as part of your contact information. Current parents should have their children added to their account already.

In September, every new student will be allocated a username and password to access not only the VLE, but the school network as well. When logging into Firefly, pupils must pick the log in with Office 365 option on the right-hand side of the login page. They will then be prompted to enter their school email address, e.g. #####@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk, where the ##### are the pupils 4-digit username.

The password they then use to login is the same one they will have chosen when first logging onto the computers at school.

There are also mobile apps available for both parents and pupils, which can be downloaded from the appropriate app store. These are called Firefly for Parents and Firefly for Students, and are free. When logging in for the first time, the same username and password must be used along with the school code: balcarras, to link successfully with our system.

School Network

Pupils can access their school files from home, including both their personal Home Drive and the shared Pupil Resources folder, through OneDrive.

To access these files:

Use the OneDrive link at the top of the school website, or

Go to the school's Virtual Learning Environment (Firefly) and follow the links provided.

Because these files are stored in the cloud, any changes made at home will automatically update—there's no need to email files back and forth or worry about different versions.

If your son or daughter needs help logging in, they should use their school email address (e.g. 1234@baccarras.gloucs.sch.uk) and the password they use to login the school computers.

Online Safety

The school has a well-established ICT Code of Conduct. All pupils will be allowed access to the internet for school related activity. Anything not directly linked to schoolwork, such as playing or downloading games and accessing social media services is prohibited. Pupils who break the code of conduct, which is monitored by our network manager, will be sanctioned. This often includes having their network access revoked.

When outside of school, pupils should continue to use technology in a responsible manner. In particular, pupils should be mindful of how you use social media services, such as Instagram and TikTok. It is strongly recommended that pupils make their profiles private. Pupils should also carefully consider how they communicate with each other on these platforms as this is often the cause of friendship issues within groups..

We recommend that parents monitor computer, smart phone and tablet use at home. Support in this can often help prevent or mitigate problems caused by the use of social media. Parents of younger pupils should also be aware of the age restrictions many social media services have, the majority requiring users to be at least 13 years old.

We recommend all parents read the school's advice on social media safeguarding which can be found on the school website: www.baccarras.co.uk / Our school / Safeguarding and Wellbeing / Social Media.

Notes



Balcarras School

East End Road, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL53 8QF

Tel: 01242 515881

Email: admin@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Website: www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk