

Update from the Head

Dear Parents,

So, we reach October and all is well at Balcarras. It is great to see the House competitions back up and running again. Last week we had Cross Country, this week House Chess started and next week we have House Music.

New Year 12 Settling in Well

One of the things I am most delighted about is just how well our new Year 12 have settled into life at Balcarras. They are our biggest ever year group with 255 pupils on the roll including 40 pupils from the High School Leckhampton. It has been great to meet so many of our new cohort and to watch them interacting with one another. I wish them well for the year ahead.

Display Competition

During the staff briefing on Monday, I gave out the prizes in the 2026 Balcarras School Display Competition. This year it was too difficult to decide the overall winner so we shared the award between Art, history, geography, DT and RS with honourable mentions for English, music and psychology. Individual room awards went to Mr Young, Miss Hall and Mrs Baker while Mr Harding's First World War Display won the best board category. Of course, it's all a bit of a fun though there is a good reason behind it. We want the school's physical environment to be a metaphor for its standards.



House Chess



Blaise Pascal wrote that, "Chess is the gymnasium of the mind". Well there was plenty of brain power being used when I popped into the Year 7 round of the 2026 House Chess Competition on Tuesday. Chess is a great game and I am so pleased that it is high profile at Balcarras. I played on my school's chess team back in the day in Bradford. We only ever won one game—away to Salts Grammar School. How we celebrated—Mr Wright treated us all to a bag of chips with scraps on! Stay tuned for more info about the House Chess Competition.

House Music

You are all warmly invited to the 2026 House Music Highlights Concert on Wednesday 7th October at 7pm in the Main School Hall at Balcarras. It is always a wonderful event.

Glenfall tours

On Wednesday we toured Year 6 parents and pupils from Glenfall School around the school. Their Year 6 residential had been booked during the same week as our open week. My thanks to Mr Davidson for assisting me.

Balcarras Through to the Regionals



On Wednesday the U16 hockey team competed in the Gloucestershire Schools Hockey Championships. Balcarras emerged undefeated. It was a round robin tournament and they finished level with KLB at the top of the table. KLB will go through as winners due to goal difference and we will go through as runners up.

The scores/table can be found on the following website:

<https://gloucestershire.tornado.co.uk/live-score/203/>

Well done to everyone in the team.

PTFA News

We are delighted that the PTFA are hosting an icebreaker event at Dunkertons following the Year 7 Tutor Evening next Thursday. All the details are on the flyer. Thank you to Dunkertons for hosting this event.

Tickets are one sale for the Clothes Swap Event here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/clothes-swap-2026-tickets-2001697216258>



YEAR 7 ICEBREAKER - THURSDAY 8th OCT

Venue: Dunkerton's Tap Room

Entry: Free

Doors open: 6.15pm after Year 7 Tutor Evening

End: The event will run to 8pm with the PFTA ... but you're welcome to hang around after.

We'll have a DJ and dancing for the pupils (who are still your responsibility).

Thank you to Dunkertons for kindly hosting the event.

For further information please contact ptfa@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

DUNKERTONS
LONDON RD • CHELTENHAM

Wednesday's CEP event: The Young Designers 2027 – The future of fashion?

This week saw the launch of the 2027 CEP Young Designers program, with a hands-on workshop delivered by some of the designers from Superdry and hosted by HSL. Always one of the most in-demand (and therefore oversubscribed!) projects, it is a great example of the type of unique opportunity that The Cheltenham Educational Partnership – which is comprised of all the secondary schools in Cheltenham, both state and independent – can offer. Pleasingly this year, testimony to the current strength of the D&T Textiles program at school, Balcarras have been able to enter 3 teams.

This year the focus is: From Forgotten to Flourishing – Transforming Fashion Through Sustainability and Renewal. Over the course of the winter the students will be taking part in a number of workshops, hosted by different schools including Balcarras, each of which will look at a different element of the design process. This will all then culminate in a showcase next summer when the teams will introduce their designs by walking them down the catwalk.

And if the first workshop was anything to go by, it is going to be as fascinating as ever in terms of seeing what the students eventually design and make. The team from Superdry brought with them (as you can see from the photos!) lots of garments that are going to act as a starting point for the project. And you suspect that the insight the professional designers offered, into how to put sustainability right at the heart of the design process, will prove to be both influential and invaluable over the year.



Heads Visiting

It is always a pleasure to show visitors around Balcarras. This week I showed two colleague heads around—on Thursday Sam Wood who is head of Richard Pates School and on Friday Chris Townsend who is the Head of Cheltenham College.

Balcarras Careers Fair 2026

The Balcarras Careers Fair 2026 was a fantastic success, with an excellent turnout from students and families throughout the evening.

We were delighted to welcome **over 60 exhibitors** from a wide range of industries and organisations, giving students the opportunity to explore an impressive variety of career pathways, professions and future opportunities. Alongside the exhibition stands, a number of universities delivered presentations throughout the evening, providing students with valuable information about university life, choosing courses and different routes into higher education.

The event was particularly successful because of the enthusiasm and engagement shown by our students. We have received **extremely positive feedback from exhibitors**, with many taking the time to praise our students for their excellent behaviour, politeness and genuine enthusiasm.

A number of exhibitors commented on how well prepared the students were, particularly the quality of the questions they asked. Students were confident in approaching employers, universities and professionals, asking thoughtful questions and showing a real interest in finding out more about different careers and progression routes.

It was wonderful to see students of all ages engaging with such a wide range of organisations and beginning to think about their future pathways. Events such as the Careers Fair provide an invaluable opportunity for students to speak directly with people working in different sectors and gain a better understanding of the skills, qualifications and experiences needed to pursue their ambitions.

A huge thank you to all of our exhibitors, universities, presenters and staff who gave up their time to support the event. We would also like to thank all the students and parents who attended and made the evening such a success.

My thanks to Mrs Lewis and Mrs Towers for all of their superb work organising this year's fair.



Sixth Form News

Post-16 events:

This week we took volunteer alumni students from Y12 back to visit their respective previous schools as we attended post-16 events at both Winchcombe and Pittville schools. It was lovely to meet some of next year's potential Sixth Form students whilst they engaged with our student ambassadors. We are also very grateful for the ambassadors that supported last night's career event here at Balcarras. In the next few weeks we will also be visiting The High School Leckhampton and Cirencester Kingshill school for their post-16 events.

Parking and driving:

Please can we remind all parents, carers, visitors and student drivers to drive carefully and sensibly at all times, especially in and around the school site and particularly the Sixth Form entrance side of the school car park, students of all ages use this exit from school. Please can we also ask that when parking near the school, driveways and other access points are not blocked either for local residents, other drivers or pedestrians and cyclists.

Sixth Form welcome brunches:

This week saw the last of our twice-weekly morning welcome brunches as a way of getting to know Sixth Form students that have joined us this year from other schools. Twice a week we meet at morning break with a different group of students, we share a breakfast bap and find out their time at Balcarras is going so far. Its been lovely getting to know the students although we have to all agree that by this point we are now struggling to see who attended Balcarras and who came to us from other schools and the students have all settled in so well!

Sixth Form international visit:

This week we welcomed staff from the international school Inlingua, based in Cheltenham, along with staff from an international school agency in China, to show them around our school and meet some of the staff. We are looking forward to welcoming more international students in Sixth Form this year!

UCAS:

Y13 students are full steam ahead with writing their personal statements for their UCAS applications and we have re-instated our weekly drop in clinics in Sixth Form. Those students that are making early entry applications - for example Oxbridge or medicine, have already submitted their applications for those courses.

House Music:

Sixth Form leaders have been doing a great job preparing each House for Tuesday's competition and the Wednesday highlights concert.

Interested in Teaching?



TRAIN TO TEACH

IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE
INFORMATION EVENING



 Tuesday
3rd November 2026

 5pm - 7pm

 Pate's Grammar School
Cheltenham, GL51 0HG

Book your place now by emailing admin@odysseytsh.org
or call 01242 538 240 or [sign up here](#)

Teach in Gloucestershire



TEACHER TASTER DAY

Tuesday 1st December 2026 - 8:45am - 2:00pm



JOIN US
FOR OUR SCITT
SECONDARY TEACHER
TASTER DAY

 Balcarras School, East End Road, Charlton Kings,
Cheltenham, Glos GL53 8QF

Considering a Career in Teaching?

Join us for an inspiring and informative Teacher Taster Day, designed to give you a real insight into the profession and support you in taking your first steps into teaching.

What to Expect

- ✓ **Meet Experienced Educators**
Gain valuable insights from current teachers, trainee teachers, and training managers.
- ✓ **Real Classroom Perspectives**
Hear first-hand experiences about life in the classroom and the realities of teacher training.
- ✓ **Explore Training Pathways**
Learn about routes into teaching, including SCITT programmes, and how to apply.

Whether you are ready to apply or just beginning to explore your options, this event provides an excellent opportunity to learn more about a career in teaching.



To reserve your place, please email
teachertraining@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

[Sign up here.](#)

More Incredible Music Videos Launching Today

Over the next four weeks the Music Department will release 4 more music videos. The first release tonight sees a wonderful performance of *Misty* by Isaac Costa Hall. The word to describe Isaac's performance is: *sublime*. Watch here:

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



Year 7 Girls Football – report from Mrs Thomson



Our Year 7's had their first ever football match since starting Balcarras on Thursday against Bournside. Two teams of Year 7's played in an away match and although the score did not represent the ability of our players the girls had a fantastic time. A pupil was overheard on the journey back saying to her friend 'from the way everyone is on the minibus, you'd think we had won!'. The girls were full of laughter on the way back to school and showed true sportswomanship during the match. Well done Team Balcarras!

Right, that is it. The school year has found its way into October. The site looked lovely this week—there is beautiful colour in the trees and the grass has recovered its greenness—it even looked lush in places. Last year in one of my updates I quoted a poem by the American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. Here is the opening verse of another of his poems—*October*.

October is the treasurer of the year,
And all the months pay bounty to her store;
The fields and orchards still their tribute bear,
And fill her brimming coffers more and more
But she, with youthful lavishness,
Spends all her wealth in gaudy dress,
And decks herself in garments bold
Of scarlet, purple, red, and gold.

Lovely, isn't it? Right another weekend with no Leeds United to worry about. I must say I don't enjoy this long premier league break. Have a nice one.

Dominic Burke