

Update from the Head

Dear Parents,

At last we have had some rain and it has started to feel a little cooler—I might dig out my vests this weekend. It has been a great week at Balcarras. We have been drowning in sporting silverware—with several notable victories...more news below.

It has also been a massive week for music in the school. House Music on Tuesday was a joy and the Highlights Concert on Wednesday a real treat. I have had quite a busy week at Balcarras—I guess it is week 6 of the term but it has felt particularly full on. How lovely it was just to stop for a couple of hours on Wednesday night and listen to some sublime music. Elton John said: "Music has healing power. It has the ability to take people out of themselves for a few hours." That was certainly my experience on Wednesday. My congratulations to everyone involved.

2026 Cast of Guys and Dolls Announced

I love this time of year. The school comes alive with music and drama. On Monday lunch the cast for the 2026 production of Guys and Dolls was announced. There was great excitement in the gym as pupils found out which role they will be playing.



Cheltenham Education Partnership Event

On Wednesday evening I went to the Annual Celebration event of the Cheltenham Education Partnership (CEP). The CEP brings together each of Cheltenham's secondary schools from both private and state sectors. The event, held at Cheltenham College, brought together pupils and staff to celebrate the various events and projects that the partnership sponsors. It was a lovely occasion.



Visit to the Richard Pate School

On Tuesday evening Mr Constance and I represented Balcarras at a futures event for parents of Year 3, 4 and 5 pupils at Richard Pate School. We chatted to parents about what Balcarras has to offer and afterwards snuck away for a sneaky pint.

House Music Competition

House Music was brilliant once again (we even had a DJ!). We had so many students involved and the sixth form leaders doing the houses proud in their organisation and professionalism.

The results were exceptionally close with only 1 point separating 1st and 2nd place. However, there can only be one winner; congratulations to **Ottewell** who took top spot this year!

The results were:

1st - **Ottewell**

2nd - **Selvey**

3rd - **Foley**

4th - **Graveney**

Here is a photo of our Guest Judge, Mr Matt Bunting, Head of Music at HSL, announcing the result. The concert on Wednesday was a real triumph. Congratulations to everyone involved. Here is a nice photograph of a very proud Mr Amor alongside the Ottewell Sixth Form leaders.



Another Music Video will be released....



This evening the music department will release another video. This time our former pupil Henry Hockenhull plays harmonica. Check it out here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@baccarrasmusic495>

SPORTING NEWS

Congratulations to our U14 girls, who won the County Hockey! 🏏

Competing in a round-robin tournament, the girls were undefeated throughout and secured **1st place**. A fantastic achievement and a brilliant display of teamwork, determination and skill. Well done, girls! Now on to the regionals!



Congratulations to our Under 16 girls who won the county Netball



Success for our netballers who became County Champions on Tuesday afternoon. Well done to them - apparently they were amazing!

Congratulations to our U14 girls football team

Balcarras Girls U14s opened their season in style with an impressive 4-2 victory over Bournside on a beautiful autumnal afternoon.

Playing some excellent football and embracing the spirit of the beautiful game, the team produced a strong all-round performance full of energy, teamwork and determination. Goals came from Jamina, Ava, Roxy and Maddie, with each player making a valuable contribution to a deserved win.



Across the pitch, Balcarras worked hard for one another, moved the ball well and showed real quality both in attack and defence. The result was a fitting reward for a fantastic team effort and the perfect way to begin the new season.

A memorable afternoon of football, and an encouraging start with plenty more to look forward to in the weeks ahead.

West of England School Golf Championships



On Wednesday Balcarras made our debut in the West of England Golf Championships held at Burnham and Berrow Golf Course. The Balcarras Trust Team which comprised Teddy, Artie, Stan, and Alex from Balcarras and Noah from the High School Leckhampton, set off early on Wednesday morning. The opening 18 holes were played Wednesday afternoon before a further 36 holes on Thursday. This is the first time that a state school team has entered the competition.

The competition involved teams from 8 schools. We ranked 6th after the first day which placed us in the plate competition played over 36 holes on day 2. We beat Cheltenham College 4-1 in the semi-final and then beat Marlborough College 5-0 in the final. I invited the boys to my office on Friday to celebrate their success and afterwards we had a photo on the lawns.

Congratulations to Mr Perry

The boys played ever so well in securing the Plate Trophy but so did Mr Perry. He was victorious in the teacher's competition. Well done to him. This is the first time that Balcarras has been invited to this tournament. I did ask Mr Perry to take it easy and win some friends. I am afraid he didn't listen - Balcarras left with two of the trophies available!



Year 7s Visit the Cheltenham Literature Festival - Mrs Baker and Ms Kelly

On Friday 9th October, a group of Year 7s visited the Cheltenham Literature Festival in recognition of the brilliant start they have made in English lessons at Balcarras.

We enjoyed a talk from the author Matt Goodfellow, who spoke about his life growing up in Manchester, his neurodiversity and his many books written in verse. The students described him as 'inspiring', 'funny' and 'energetic'.

Most importantly, Matt emphasised that every voice is powerful and encouraged each student to be a positive change maker.



Year 12 Pupil Pursuit

On Thursday I did my first pupil pursuit of the year. I follow the timetable of two pupils to sample what life is like in the school. On Thursday I followed two Year 12 pupils around. I really enjoy sampling lessons and watching other teachers teach—it is one of the great privileges of my job. Year 12 have settled in well, there seemed to be great focus everywhere I went.

Year 7 Tutor Evening

It was nice to meet some of our new Year 7 parents on Thursday evening. Year 7 have made a great start to their Balcarras career.

Icebreaker

On Thursday evening I went along to the Year 7 Icebreaker event at Dunkertons. The PTFA organise an icebreaker for parents and pupils and this year were able to secure Dunkertons as a venue. It was a lovely evening and I enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many of our parents. I would like to thank our wonderful PTFA for organising this. We are so grateful to them. I would also like to thank Dunkertons for hosting and our very own Lachie (Year 12) for being the DJ.

Bikeability Course

I have always been a big supporter of the Bikeability scheme and I am so pleased that so many Balcarras pupils take part. This year we have over 80 pupils signed up.

PTFA Clothes Swap

Don't forget tickets are still on sale for the Clothes Swap evening, link below:

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

European Day of Languages – note from Mr Foakes, MFL

Congratulations to the tutor group 8O2 for coming first!
Congratulations to Lowenna in 7G1 and Axel in 7O2 for winning a free breakfast!

Notice from MFL – Year 7 Trip

We are delighted to announce that the Year 7 trip to France has now been launched! Initial letters have been sent to parents/guardians via email with further information.

 First deposit deadline: Friday 16th October

Please ensure the first deposit is made by the deadline to secure your child's place.

We look forward to an exciting trip!



YEAR 7 TRIP TO FRANCE
MONDAY 12th JULY – THURSDAY 15th JULY 2027

The poster features four images: a cathedral (Notre-Dame de Paris), the Disneyland Paris entrance, a busy outdoor market, and the Eiffel Tower.



BALCARRAS SCHOOL MUSIC · CHELTENHAM

Let them 'Remember Your Name'

We're looking for local business sponsors for our next YouTube release: a very special brass-backed cover of Sam Fender's **"Remember My Name"**, recorded locally and launching on the 23rd October, with a donation link raising money for **Sue Ryder**.

250,000+ views on the YouTube channel and counting	Every family reached by the Head's newsletter	Sue Ryder fundraising built in
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VIDEO SPONSORS £500

- Feature in the Head's newsletter to all families, with your link
- Social media mentions and website coverage
- Credit and a contact-details slide at the end of the video

HEADLINE SPONSORS £1,000

- Everything in the £500 package
- Your logo on new T-shirts for Balcajazz, Chamber Choir and Cantabile
- Worn across Cheltenham, at the Jazz Festival and on tour next summer

Every pound goes on music resources.
youtube.com/balcarrasmusic495

GET IN TOUCH
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Christmas Dinner

Tuesday 8th December
(years 7 & 8-1)

Wednesday 9th December
(years 8-2 & 9)

Thursday 10th December
(years 10 & 11)

Friday 11th December
(years 12 & 13)

Menu

Roast Turkey

Roasted Vegetable & Feta Cheese Tart
(vegan option available on request)

Roast Potatoes, Stuffing, Pigs in Blankets, Brussels, Carrots & Peas

Christmas Pudding, Mince Pie or Ice Cream

The Cost will be £5.25 per person. Please pay online via Scopay
no cash will be taken for payment. Online payment will close on
Thursday 3rd December

FANTASTIC RAFFLE PRIZES

Year 12 Dorset Residential

Over the weekend 72 Year 12 geographers are heading to Dorset to complete their assessed practical. They'll be visiting Lyme Regis, Chesil Beach, Durdle Door, Lulworth Cove and Poole Harbour. Sounds like a great trip.

McMillan Coffee Morning

One of the lovely traditions at Balcarras is that we always hold an annual McMillan Coffee Morning in the staff room. It happened on Thursday 24th November—I had a slice of Mrs Adkins legendary Guinness Cake. This week we sent a cheque for £274.56 to McMillan.

Right that is it. I am going to the Emirates Stadium tomorrow to watch Leeds. I have to admit I travel more in hope than expectation. As Alexander Pope wrote: *"Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed."*

Have a nice weekend.

Dominic Burke