

Update from the Head

Dear Parents,

We reach the end of the penultimate week of this first half term—just one to go before a rest. Yesterday was an interesting day—the DfE published the provisional 2026 School League Tables. Today's update starts with this exciting news....

Balcarras—Best in the West

Once again Balcarras is the highest performing state comprehensive school in the Southwest region. Our Attainment 8 Score of 62.1 was the highest for any of the circa 300 comprehensive schools in the region. Attainment 8 measures pupils' attainment in English, maths, science and four more GCSEs.

I would like to place on record my congratulations to the pupils who achieved these chart topping results and to the teachers who inspired them.

Donate a Dollar Gift Aid Scheme



I would like to encourage you to contribute to the school's gift aid scheme. We use this to pay for the school minibuses and fund other nice to have things. See link here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/page/?title=Fundraising&pid=24>

Message from the music department...

🎵 One Song. One Voice. One Cause. ❤️

📺 THE WAIT IS ALMOST OVER...



We're incredibly excited to announce our latest music video: a powerful rendition of 'Remember My Name' by Sam Fender, featuring one of our talented student vocalists accompanied by a brass ensemble. Filmed across three stunning locations in the Cotswolds, this is one of our most ambitious music projects yet! 🎥

But this release is about more than just music... ❤️ We're proud to be supporting Sue Ryder, a charity providing vital palliative care and grief support to individuals and families when they need it most.

Through the power of music, we're hoping to make a meaningful difference.

📅 FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER 2026 🎥

Stay tuned for more exclusive previews as we count down to the release! ❤️ Help us make music matter. Our fundraising page is now live — link in bio!

The JustGiving page is all set up now and we've linked this to the video which will be released next Friday. The link below gives you a sneak preview.

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/balcarrasmusic>

<https://youtube.com/shorts/jPEu0Fnt0HU?si=XAgxlyH884tRfPrh>

Charity Donation to Sue Ryder

I'm delighted to let you know that the total we've raised for Sue Ryder from our annual sponsored walk is £8,821.26. I'm very hopeful that our campaign detailed above will add significantly to this.

District Cross Country

Congratulations to all of the runners who competed in the annual District Cheltenham Cross Country held at Ashbury Manor on Friday 9th October. Over 70 students competed for the school in an afternoon that started in glorious sunshine but finished for those in the final two races in monsoon rains!!

Special individual congratulations to Rosie (Yr 11) who won the Inter Girls race and Patrick (Yr 12) who won the Senior Boys race. Also, Matilda (Yr 8) who finished second in the Junior Girls, Otto (Yr 8) and Charlie (Yr 8) who finished second and third in the Junior Boys, Noah (Yr 11) who finished second in the Inter Boys and finally Lockie (Yr 12) who finished third in the Senior Boys race.

As well as the fantastic individual results Balcarras once again dominated the district team events winning 4 of the eight team competitions, finishing second in one, and third and fourth in two more out of the 12 district team competing!!

Well done to all of those in the four winning teams, Inter Girls, Junior Boys, Inter Boys and Senior Boys.

Boys Year 12/13			Girls Year 10/11		
Position	School	Points	Position	School	Points
1	Balcarras	19	1	Balcarras	77
2	Pates	23	2	Pates	94
3	Bournside	39	3	Cleeve	143
Boys Year 10/11			Boys Year 8/9		
Position	School	Points	Position	School	Points
1	Balcarras	41	1	Balcarras	66
2	Pates	108	2	High School	122
3	Cotswold	170	3	Cleeve	140

Good luck also to those students who finished in the top 12 of each race as they will now be going on to represent the Cheltenham District in the Gloucestershire County round later in the term.

Cheltenham Education Partnership



On Thursday our very own Orlaith and Nye (year 10) along with other students from Dean Close, All Saints' and Pittville welcomed Heartstopper and Emmerdale actor, and autism advocate, Bradley Riches for our live edition of student led podcast, 'Spill the Tea'. It's a podcast series produced by the Cheltenham Education Partnership. Bradley spoke to the students about his own flourishing story, and what a community of support really means to him. That's Bradley in the nice blue knitwear in case you didn't know!

Trust Subject leaders

On Monday all of the heads of subject from across the Balcarras Trust met to network and swap ideas. It is one of the great advantages of being in a trust that you have access to these networks.

Textiles Trip

On Wednesday, 40 Textiles students from Years 10-13 travelled to London for a day of creative inspiration.

A visit to the Fashion and Textile Museum's *Ossie Clark & Celia Birtwell* exhibition allowed students to explore iconic fashion pieces, innovative garment construction and the bold prints that helped define an era of British fashion.

The museum also provided an opportunity for students to create their own pattern designs and experiment with paper fashion illustration activities inspired by the exhibition.

Students also spent time at Borough Market, experiencing one of London's most vibrant cultural destinations. The market offered a wealth of visual inspiration through its colours, displays and architecture, as well as the opportunity to sample a variety of foods from different cultures.

The trip provided valuable inspiration for both GCSE and A Level studies, and students represented the school exceptionally well throughout the day.



Cheltenham Literature Festival

There have been a number of trips down to the Literature Festival this week involving pupils across the age range. We are so fortunate to have Cheltenham Festivals operating in the town.

PTFA Clothes Swap

CLOTHES SWAP

Friday 16th October 2026 7pm - 9pm
Balcarras School Gym

What can I donate?

Ladies and secondary school age girls clothing including jewellery, accessories, shoes and bags.
Please ensure donated items are clean and in good condition, with no holes etc.

You can drop donations into school reception from Monday 12th October or bring on the night.

If you have clothes you want to donate earlier than 12th, contact Wendy on 07909 221330 and we will arrange to collect.

Don't worry if you have nothing to donate - that's ok too!



Scan here for tickets



Tickets
£10 in advance
£12 on Door
£5 - Under 18
[Eventbrite Link](#)

There will be a bar with drinks and snacks available to buy
All proceeds go to the PTFA to support the school

Bring a bag - there is no limit on how many clothes you can take home with you!

The PTFA Clothes Swap is tonight. Please do go along if you fancy some new threads.

[Click here to buy tickets.](#)

Poppy Appeal

Please support the **Poppy Appeal** by bringing in a donation. The suggested donation is **£2-£5**, but any contribution is welcome.

Poppies will be available in the **Maths foyer at breaktime**, where you can donate by **cash or card**. Students will also visit tutor groups next week and after half term.



Year 12 Geography Field work trip to Dorset



Last weekend the Geography department took 72 Year 12 geography students to the Jurassic Coast for the Annual Geography Fieldtrip. See article here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1572>

UCAS Early Entry

The process of supporting Year 13 around next steps is well underway. Whether they are applying to UCAS, for apprenticeships, or for jobs we will support them to the very best of our ability. Those pupils who are applying for Oxford or Cambridge or for medicine or veterinary courses have to apply through UCAS Early Entry. The deadline for this was this week. The school supported 21 applications either to Oxford, Cambridge or for medicine, veterinary or dentistry. My thanks to everyone in the sixth form but particularly Mr Boughton who runs the UCAS process.

Last Year's Destinations

News that we are already well underway with the UCAS process prompted me to ask Mr Leatherbarrow where we finished with last Year's Year 13. 207 pupils have started university courses. 6 of these were on early entry courses (4 Oxbridge and 2 Medicine), whilst 104 were at Russel Group Universities.

The top destinations were:

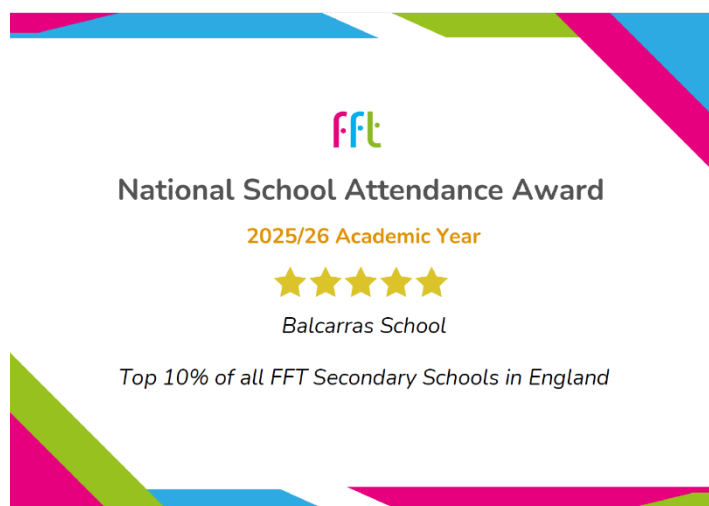
Cardiff	19
Exeter	15
Liverpool	12
Birmingham	9
Oxford Brookes	8

Bath	7
Bristol UWE	7
Manchester Met	7
Warwick	7
Durham	6

Great destinations there although this is the first time in my headship that Yorkshire doesn't feature in our top ten destinations. I am planning to deliver some assemblies to the sixth form on what God's County has to offer!

Attendance

This week we received a nice certificate from the kind people at Fisher Family Trust. They have worked out that our attendance was in the top 10% of all schools nationally last year. Good.



And so another weekend awaits. I have the nostalgia of a trip to Leeds to look forward to. On Sunday a certain team from Manchester are visiting and for the first time in 50 years Leeds head into the fixture as favourites. To quote the late, great Kevin Keegan: "I will love it if we beat them— LOVE IT!". Have a nice weekend.

Dominic Burke