



BALCARRAS
From strength to strength

NEWSLETTER

Welcome from the Headteacher

Dear Parents,

Hope all is well with you as we head towards Christmas. I have to say I'm looking forward to it already....I just love the mince pie season!

I am delighted by how the school year is progressing. I spend quite a lot of time walking around the school and sampling the atmosphere and I have to say it is real pleasure to observe just how positive and engaged our young people are. On this theme, earlier in the term, I hosted a visit from the Gloucestershire Education Forum whose Chair is Roy Blatchford. Several colleagues from Gloucestershire attended a seminar and went on a learning walk around the school. The theme for the visit was our work with SEND children but in fact we had a good look at what was going on across the school. After the visit Roy wrote the staff a letter. Here is an excerpt: "Might I say—as someone who visits lots of classrooms in the UK and internationally—that the Balcarras culture for learning is amongst the best I see anywhere: sparkling environments, focused students, animated and intelligent teaching. That cocktail which you have established over time is special—and a privilege to visit."

I must say I was delighted to read this. As ever huge credit must go to the pupils who just continue to be a delight to work with and for.

There are lots of lovely Christmas events coming up which give you as parents the chance to sample the atmosphere too. Please do come along and join us for the Annual Carol Concert next week at Holy Apostles (details below). Also make sure you get your tickets for Balcarras School's performance of *The 39 Steps* which is now less than two weeks away (also details below).

Keep up to date on all our news:

WWW.BALCARRAS.GLOUCS.SCH.UK

BALCARRAS AMONGST TOP 30 COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS IN THE COUNTRY

DOMINIC BURKE, HEADTEACHER

We are at that point of the year where we can compare last year's examinations results to other schools up and down the country. As ever Balcarras compares very favourably. One of the government's key measures is the percentage of pupils gaining 5+ in English and Maths. Balcarras achieved 78% and in doing so secured a position inside the top 30 comprehensive schools in the country. Once again well done to last year's Year 11.

UCAS ENTRY

DOMINIC BURKE, HEADTEACHER

It is an exciting time of year in the sixth form because students in Year 13 are busy putting in applications for UCAS or for apprenticeships. I would like to thank the sixth form team for their sterling work in supporting what is a big year group. The Early Entry candidates (entry for Oxford, Cambridge, Veterinary and Medicine) are starting to hear whether they have got an interview. So far 13 pupils have secured an interview at either Oxford (8) or Cambridge (5) and we have still yet to hear about a further 4. Well done to them.

WINCHCOMBE SCHOOL JOINS THE BALCARRAS TRUST

DOMINIC BURKE, HEADTEACHER

On November 1st Winchcombe School joined the Balcarras Trust. There is a long history of collaboration between the two schools and I am delighted that this collaboration is now formalised. I am a firm believer that schools have much to learn from each other.

THE BALCARRAS TRUST ANNUAL CONFERENCE

DOMINIC BURKE, HEADTEACHER

On Friday 24th November 200 colleagues from across the Trust's schools met at the Balcarras campus for the annual conference. This year's theme was wellbeing specifically related to staff. Our keynote speaker was Belinda Heaven from GHLL and her talk went down very well. After the keynote there were a number of workshops for staff to choose from. The topic we chose for this year's conference demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that everyone who works here feels well supported.

YET MORE SPORTING SUCCESS FOR BALCARRAS

DOMINIC BURKE, HEADTEACHER

It has been quite a term for Girls Hockey. The Under 16 Girls won the County Championship and came ever so close to reaching the National finals. They were unbeaten at the Regionals but missed out narrowly to Warminster School. The Under 14 Girls lost the County Championship on flicks to CLC but still made it through to the Regionals where they acquitted themselves very well. Last Friday the Under 12 Team won the County Championships beating Kings School 1-0 in the final. They now go forward to the regionals.

In Cross Country Balcarras once again dominated the District Competition winning 5 of the 8 age range competitions. Well done to everyone who took part.

In tennis the Year 7 and 8 boys team came third in the Southwest Regional Finals held at Bath University. Well done to them.

Please do look at the website for more details on each of these and more.

REMEMBRANCE

DOMINIC BURKE, HEADTEACHER

My thanks to Will Staunton and Lucy Paris Johnson for representing Balcarras at the Annual Remembrance Ceremony at the Cenotaph in Cheltenham. Every year one of Cheltenham's schools is invited to take part and this year was our turn. Will and Lucy read the poem *For the Fallen* by Laurence Binyon, before laying a wreath. They read the poem beautifully.

SENIOR CITIZENS TEA PARTY

DOMINIC BURKE, HEADTEACHER

On Wednesday 29th November Balcarras pupils hosted over 80 of Charlton Kings' senior citizens for a tea party. The pupils baked cakes and arranged musical entertainment. They also spent two hours chatting to their guests. Some of our visitors had connections to Balcarras, others didn't. It was a lovely event and I would like to thank the Parish Council for their help organising invites and providing table cloths and decorations. I would also like to thank Mark Constance, who put the student team together, and the pupils themselves who were a real credit to the school.

TRIPS & VISITS

DOMINIC BURKE, HEADTEACHER

I am delighted to see so many trips and visits going out since the start of the year. I had a great time with the geography department in Iceland during half term and I know that all sorts of things have been going on since. Again, the website is a good place to go if you want a flavour of this.

CUT YOUR CARBON MONTH

JON PEARCE, ECOCLUB

Throughout November Balcarras have been taking part in cut your carbon month. This idea came from Ecoschools, who award the Green flag. Balcarras have been awarded this a couple of times in the last few years. The Eco club came up with suggestions on how to reduce the schools and individuals carbon footprint.

Pupils have been given a 9 part challenge to cut their carbon, with ideas such as having a 'meat free day' or 'ditching the drive'. Pupils who take part will be entered into a draw for some fairtrade chocolate as way of a well done for taking positive actions.

We had a guest speaker come into school and talk with the Eco club and sixth formers, she was the 'Cheltenham Borough Council, clean air education officer' and she had lots of information on the poor state of air quality in our town and how to reduce the impacts of this on our health. For example, did you know you are exposed to worse air quality if you sit in a car in traffic, than if you are walking past traffic. Also, an idling car releases 150 balloons worth of pollution per minute.

The staff had an 'empty car park day' where they were encouraged to car share, walk or cycle. There was a 25% reduction in the number of cars in the car park on that day, ten staff won a prize of fairtrade chocolate to celebrate this.

If you would like to know more about this, or sustainability around school come to Eco club on Monday lunchtime with Mr Pearce in 7A6.

YEAR 13 UCAS APPLICATIONS 2023-24

DARREN LEATHERBARROW, HEAD OF SIXTH FORM

A polite reminder to all Year 13 students and parents that the Balcarras deadline for UCAS applications is Tuesday 5th December. Our early deadline exists to enable us to triple-check applications, personal statements and academic references ahead of their final submission to UCAS. Even if your son or daughter is currently considering a gap year or a deferral, we strongly recommend that applications are made in order to ensure students have all post-18 options open to them next autumn.

YEAR 13 TRIAL EXAMS

DARREN LEATHERBARROW, HEAD OF SIXTH FORM

A polite reminder that Year 13 students will be on study leave during the first two weeks after the Christmas break, Monday 8th January to Friday 19th January 2024, as they undertake their trial exams. Students will be welcome to use Study throughout this period.

SIXTH FORM OPEN EVENING – THURSDAY 18TH JANUARY 2024

DARREN LEATHERBARROW, HEAD OF SIXTH FORM

A polite reminder to parents of students in Year 11 that the Balcarras Sixth Form Open Evening will be taking place on Thursday 18th January 2024. Further details will follow in due course, but an important date for your diaries!

ANTI BULLYING WEEK

ADRIENNE FORD, ASSISTANT HEAD OF FOLEY HOUSE



We were really impressed with the turnout on Monday 13th November with many staff and students wearing odd socks to kick off the start of Anti-Bullying week 2023. Year 7 were particularly good and really got on board showing off how unique they are through the medium of bright, jazzy, odd socks. Activities to help us all consider other people's feelings, learn how to be inclusive school community members and celebrate our differences will continue on throughout the school year. Please remember if you are worried about something or someone it is always best to talk it through, don't keep quiet! Speak to your families, tutors and pastoral team if needed.

PARENTS EVENING BOOKINGS

NEIL BAXTER, DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

The system for booking a parents evening appointment will change from January 2024. Pupils will have a paper booking sheet which they can fill in after arranging a time with their subject teachers. This system is in response to parent concerns that some parents were missing out on the opportunity for an appointment with a subject teacher when using the electronic system.

Parents should prioritise those subject teachers they would most like to speak to on the evening. The electronic booking system was expensive and now that the subscription is due for renewal, this seems a good time to save some money, to be used elsewhere for the pupils' benefit.

PE NEWS

MARK HARVEY, HEAD OF PE

Many congratulations to the U13 & U15 Cheltenham Harriers Teams got to the NATIONAL FINAL (for the second successive year) of the UK Youth Development League!!! Of the 166 teams that start the season, representing 199 Clubs, 7 qualify for the National Final - and Cheltenham Harriers was one of them!

They finished 6th in the final and there were quite a few Balcarras students in the team! Well done to all of those below who represented the team and good luck for next year!!



SUCCESS FOR BALCARRAS GOLFERS

LUKE PERRY

Golf for Balcarras students goes from strength to strength with three students selected for the Gloucestershire U16 county squad. Alex Willams, Ben Warwicker and Sam Ellicott will represent the county in the 2024 season playing other counties around the Midlands and the South West. All three boys are now single figure handicappers after an excellent season and we look forward to seeing how they perform.

SIDE HUSTLE INITIATIVE – YEAR 11s DOMINATE NATIONAL COMPETITION

JACK GODDARD, TEACHER OF BUSINESS



The Side Hustle Initiative is a nationwide search for all 14-18-year-olds who either are already delivering a side hustle or who have an amazing business idea that they are passionate about launching.

Thanks to your votes three of the Balcarras entries came back with some prize money!

1st - Charlie Carter and Aston O'Niell (£2,000)

2nd - Lulu Poulson and Amelie Paul (£1,500)

3rd - Will Wyatt, Jude Vincent and Yannik Reilly (£500)

COTSWOLD WILDLIFE PARK, GEOGRAPHY

MELISSA BATTY – 9G1

When I went to Cotswold Wildlife park I learnt so much! We discovered facts about all the animals, from the rhinos to the penguins in an amazing day out. I took lots of images, which went on to lock the trip firmly into my memory as one of the best places I have been with Balcarras. The trip enabled us to learn things that we wouldn't learn in lesson, and it drew me and all of my group in, especially with the lions and their habitat. The male showed off as he gnawed down on the large steak he had, and let out a few mighty roars, which we heard from across the park! All in all, this was an amazing visit to an amazing place which I, and I'm sure that everyone who went agreed. It truly was a roarsome day!

PTFA NEWS

UPCOMING EVENTS

Carol concert

The School Carol service will be taking place at Holy Apostles Church at 7pm. The PTFA will be serving mince pies (made by the staff) afterwards. Please do come along and support this event on Wednesday 6th December.

School Play

The School production of "The 39 Steps" will be taking place 12th-15th December. If you can help serving interval drinks, then please email Karen Mason mason881@btinternet.com

PTFA Quiz

The annual hotly contested PTFA Quiz will be taking place on Friday 26th January at 7pm. Tickets will go on sale in the new year.

PTFA Comedy Night – Friday 8th March 2024

Tickets are already on sale for the next comedy night. Please scan the QR codes to book tickets! Thanks to those that supported the last event in October.



PTFA Second Hand Uniform Sale

There will be an additional sale taking place on Friday 26th January from 5-6.30 pm in the school gym. Further information to follow.

Easyfundraising

When Christmas shopping please consider going via our easyfundraising page. Balcarras School can benefit as you shop! Scan the QR code for more information.



EMPOWERMENT EVENT

STEPHEN COOPER, HEAD OF COMPUTING



On Friday 17th November, the Computing department took a group of year 8 girls out to this year's Empower Cyber event. Here they learnt about a wide array of computing related careers including digital forensics, artificial intelligence and robotics. It was a fantastic event and really showed off how computing is used across so many industries.

CHRISTMAS LUNCHES

IAN COLE, TRUST CATERING MANAGER



Christmas Dinner

Tuesday 12th December
(years 7&8-1)

Wednesday 13th December
(years 8-2 & 9)

Thursday 14th December
(years 10, 11, 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 £3.75 per person. Please pay online via Scopay no cash will be taken for payment. Online payment will close on Thursday 7th December



MESSAGE FROM THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER



The Children's Commissioner for England has recently launched 'The Big Ambition' to hear directly from children, young people and parents across the country.

We want to hear from all children, in every part of the country and in every setting.

This is your chance to tell key policymakers what is important to you ahead of the general election. Take part now and ensure your needs are reflected in the decisions that will affect you in years to come.



By now, I hope that you have seen my national campaign The Big Ambition. Please ensure you have shared this survey with the children and parents within your school community.

Children or parents can complete the survey here: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/thebigambition
Further resources are available on our [website](#).

It is really important that the pupils at Balcarras School have participated in The Big Ambition survey and had their say.

I want to ensure that the voices of the children in Gloucestershire are fairly represented in the findings so that I can share their views with the most senior members of the country.

I must reiterate that it is vital that all children have their voice heard through this survey because, as Children's Commissioner for England, I have a statutory duty to protect and promote the views and interests of children. The Big Ambition provides a much-needed opportunity for the children of England to tell political decision makers what is important to them ahead of the General Election. I will be sharing their responses with Government to ensure that children's voices are heard.

This survey is for all children aged 0-18, parents, carers / other adults can complete on behalf of children who are

under 6 or for children who need extra assistance.

Please share the survey and resources with teachers in your school and encourage them to use it in their lessons. Children can complete the survey in assemblies, form times, PSHE or in other lessons this term. The survey can also be done as homework and parents can assist children who cannot complete the survey themselves (children under 5 and children with Special Educational Needs). This is a great opportunity to teach children about politics and why it is important for them to use their voice!

Please do get in touch if you have any problems. My team is happy to support with the roll out in any way we can.

Yours sincerely,

Dame Rachel De Souza
Children's Commissioner for England

BREAKING THE CHAIN – YEAR 7 PUPILS

NEIL BAXTER, DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

Year 7 will watch “Breaking the Chain” on 1st February 2024

Balcarras School believes that the Personal Development programme is integral to the education offered to all pupils at Balcarras. As part of the programme, in 2024, for the first time, Year 7 will participate in a workshop called “Breaking the Chain” run by Narrative Alchemy Theatre Company. Below is a description from their website:

“Breaking the Chain is an applied theatre production that aims to raise awareness, kick-start conversations and build resilience around youth violence – with a focus on knife crime – as part of a public health approach to tackling the issue – an issue that is seeing young people seriously hurt and, all too often, killed on the streets of our towns and cities.

Recently out of prison and trying to turn his life around, Tyler is worried about his younger brother Zeke and his friend Danny. Zeke and Danny have started carrying knives and Tyler is desperate to ensure that they don’t make the same mistakes that he’s made in the past. The play follows them over the course of one day as the tensions are mounting and Tyler must intervene to avoid a tragedy and try to talk them all into breaking the chain.”

For more information about the event parents should access the following web address.

<https://www.narrativealchemy.co.uk/breaking-the-chain/>

We hope that this will be a powerful and memorable way to educate our young people.

BEHAVIOUR POLICY

NEIL BAXTER, DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

The school’s Behaviour Policy has recently been updated by the school governors. It is always useful for a parent to have a full awareness of the Behaviour Policy, so that you can advise your child. You can read the school’s policies any time on the school website.

NEWSLETTER



The newsletter will now be distributed by email and available to view on our VLE (Firefly) as well as on the school website.

It is incredibly easy and will save the school a lot of paper and the planet a lot of trees!

If you would still prefer a hard copy, please contact Karen Adkins

ksa@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Alongside our @Balcarras Twitter you may also now follow Facebook.com/BalcarrasSchool for updates and news about school life and events.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher





The
**Balcarras
Trust**



Balcarras
From strength to strength

Cleaner (Part-time)

To start as soon as possible

**Salary: point 1 = £10.50 per hour
5 days per week (Mon-Fri, Term time only)
30 hours per week (6am–8am and 2pm–6pm)**

We are looking for an enthusiastic cleaner with an excellent work ethic to join our cleaning team. Previous cleaning experience would be an advantage, although training will be provided.

To apply, please complete the application form.

(Available from our website www.thebalcarrastrust.co.uk)

and email to cleaners@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Application

To apply, please send completed application forms to cleaners@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk or postal applications can be sent to: The Cleaning Manager, Balcarras School, East End Road, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham, GL53 8QF.

Closing Date for applications: Monday 8th January 2023

This position may close earlier than stated above should a suitable applicant apply.

We encourage interested candidates to apply as soon as possible.

Interviews will be on a rolling basis.

For further information about the post, please contact the school at the above e-mail address.

The Balcarras Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This role will involve regulated activity with children. We particularly welcome applications from underrepresented groups including ethnicity, gender, transgender, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion. Please also read the Recruitment Selection and Disclosure Policy within "How to apply" which includes our policy on recruiting ex-offenders. All posts are subject to an enhanced DBS check and receipt of two satisfactory references.

COMMUNITY NOTICES

We are a local Prom Gown shop, and we would love your help in letting your students know where to find their dresses!! If you could share our poster on your media to the year 11 children that would be great. Dresses take time to order and fit, so it's not too soon to start looking. We have in fact, already started taking orders for next years Prom. We only sell one of each style to each School, so they do need to start early to secure their favourite.

Prom Ready ?

Your dress is
HERE!
Book now to
find your 2024
Prom Gown



☎ 01452 414 174

info@bridalwearandballgowns.co.uk



AS A TRUSSELL TRUST FOODBANK WE USE A REFERRAL BASED SYSTEM TO TRY AND ENSURE YOU ARE ABLE TO ACCESS SOME ADVICE AND SUPPORT AS WELL AS A FOOD PARCEL. BELOW ARE SOME ORGANISATIONS WHO CAN HELP ISSUE A VOUCHER, YOU MAY ALSO BE ABLE TO OBTAIN A VOUCHER FROM A SOCIAL WORKER, DOCTOR'S SURGERY, HEALTH PROFESSIONAL OR SCHOOL.

HELP THROUGH HARDSHIP HELPLINE

(CITIZENS ADVICE ADVISE LINE SPECIFICALLY FOR THE FOODBANK)

0808 2082 138

MP'S OFFICE

(THEY CAN ISSUE A FOOD VOUCHER)

01242 210 473

GLOUCESTER/CHELTENHAM CITIZEN'S ADVICE

01452 223014

CCP

(COMMUNITY BASED AND WELLBEING SUPPORT)

01242 228999

CGL

(DRUG & ALCOHOL RECOVERY SERVICE)

01452 223014

P3

(EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION SERVICES)

08081682443

CALL US ON 01242 570080

A poster for a party event. The background is dark with a grid of red lines and a large, glowing purple and pink checkered sphere in the upper right. The word 'PARTY!' is repeated three times in large, glowing letters: purple, red, and yellow. The event details are listed in white text: 'Saturday February 3rd', 'Balcarras School, GL53 8QF', '6.30pm - 11pm', '£20 per ticket inc pizza and local band', and 'The Bridge'. Contact information is provided: 'contact fiona@cassandfriends.org for tickets'. The logo for 'CASS & FRIENDS' is in the bottom left, and 'the bridge' is written in a large, white, serif font in the bottom right.

PARTY!
PARTY!
PARTY!

Saturday February 3rd
Balcarras School, GL53 8QF
6.30pm - 11pm
£20 per ticket inc pizza and local band
The Bridge

contact fiona@cassandfriends.org for
tickets

CASS
&FRIENDS

the
bridge