



BALCARRAS
From strength to strength

NEWSLETTER

Welcome from the Headteacher

Dear Parents,

Welcome to our final newsletter of the calendar year. It has been another great year at Balcarras. It has flown by, as they all seem to do. I don't know whether there is scientific proof that time passes quicker the older you get, but it certainly seems to be the case to me. I love the autumn term—it is so busy and purposeful—it has so many of the key school events, House Music, the Carol Concert and the production, to name but three—and at its conclusion comes Christmas, a beacon of light at the very darkest point of the year.

This is my 8th year as Head and 17th as a teacher at the school. I can't remember a better autumn term. The atmosphere is positive and the school feels relaxed, happy and purposeful. These last three weeks have been just great and they always serve as a reminder—if we needed one—as to the real value of education. Yesterday we had the Annual Balcarras Variety Performance. I can only apologise for my own contribution but, apart from that, there were so many lovely performances and it was all played out in the most supportive and collaborative atmosphere.

Keep up to date on all our news:

WWW.BALCARRAS.GLOUCS.SCH.UK

Talking of collaboration, the school's production last week of *The 39 Steps* brought together over 200 pupils and staff. It will live long in the memory of those who took part, and it was an absolute privilege to be a member of the audience. My thanks to everyone involved but particularly to Jane Watts and Tony Bennett. Two more gifted educators you will struggle to find.

Finally, I wanted to mention the Carol Concert which took place on the 6th December. It was a truly magical evening and it was impressive to see so many pupils, from right across the age range, involved in such a collaborative event. My thanks again to Jane Watts but also to the Head of Music Dan Armstrong and to everyone else who supported this superb event.

At the carol concert the Chamber Choir sang *Beautiful December* by Amy F Bernon. It wasn't a piece I knew but I was blown away, not just by the wonderful performance of Chamber Choir, but by the beauty of the words. Here are the first two verses:

Now, when the garden awaits the return spring,
Now, when the silence is deep and blue,
Now, when the winter has cast a spell again,
Beautiful December, beautiful December.

Here, where the snow is as soft as a woolly lamb,
Here, where the nightfall is deep and blue,
Here, where the stars are so bright, you reach for them,
Beautiful December, beautiful December.

December sure is beautiful now that we have reached the Christmas break! I genuinely wish all of our pupils and their families my very best wishes for a *beautiful* Christmas.

STAFF LEAVERS

DOMINIC BURKE

Miss Sophie Hill is leaving her role as Pastoral Support leading the Wellbeing Room. She is leaving for a promotion to do similar work at the Virtual School. Mrs Jayne Payne is leaving the school's cleaning team after more than 15 years dedicated service to the school. Mr Tony Bennett isn't leaving but he is going on sabbatical for two terms. He will return in September 2024.

YEAR 7 FOOTBALL

CLAIRE HEARING



Twenty seven, Year 7 girls went to the High School Leckhampton this week to play their first football match of the season.

Balcarras fielded two teams. Balcarras A team were matched really well and eventually won 1-0 after a ferocious strike from Kiki. Balcarras B team had a goal fest scoring 8 goals in their 8-4 victory. All the girls worked tirelessly and showed great team spirit. I'm sure this is the start of a successful season.

CAROL SERVICE & 39 STEPS MUSIC & DRAMA DEPARTMENT

A selection of photographs from the Carol Service and the School Production can be seen below:





MUSIC DEPARTMENT NEWS

THE MUSIC TEAM: DAN ARMSTRONG, JANE WATTS & MATT HOWELL

Phew! It's been a real whirlwind of a term for everyone involved with the Music Department! See the articles elsewhere in this edition of the newsletter for fuller reports of the Carol Concert on December 6th at Holy Apostles (over 100 students took part!) and, of course, last week's magnificent 4-night production of *The 39 Steps*... Although it's not officially a 'musical' as such, there was plenty of musical input – and huge thanks must go to our wonderful 22-strong Production Orchestra, as well as our fantastic singers (aka "Mint Spies"!) and dancers...Again, more on this elsewhere in this newsletter!

Exam Successes

Congratulations to the following students and their teachers for their recent music exam results:

Nathan King: Tobias Vacher (Y8) - Trinity Trombone - Grade 3 - Merit

Victoria Burge: Imogen Cadogan (Y7) - ABRSM Cello - Grade 3 - Merit

Tracey Vacher: James Clacker (Y8) - MTB Piano - Grade 1 - Merit

Nicola Hopkins: Georgie Robinson (Y12) - ABRSM Theory - Grade 5 - Distinction

Matt Bucher: Rock School Drums:

George Meathrel (Y9) - Grade 2 - Merit

Archie Webb (Y13) - Grade 5 - Merit

Gryff Pitcher (Y11) - Grade 4 - Merit

Looking into the New Year!

Lots of dates for your diary. Here are a few:

Tuesday 20th Feb - Lunchtime recital in the Drawing Room at Cheltenham Town Hall (more details next term)

Tuesday 5th March - in the evening - Spring Concert, Balcarras Hall

Weekend of 4/5 May - Jazz It Up - Balcajazz at the Cheltenham Jazz Festival

Friday 21st June - MIDSUMMER MUSIC 24!

A huge THANK YOU to all students and staff (including Mr Burke!) who have performed, been involved in tech and/or supported in so many ways what we have been doing over the past term! Have a lovely break!

SIXTH FORM OPEN EVENING

DARREN LEATHERBARROW, HEAD OF SIXTH FORM



The poster for the Balcarras Sixth Form Open Evening features a blue background with a large green circle in the center. The text 'BALCARRAS SIXTH FORM OPEN EVENING' is written in white within the green circle, with the date '18.01.24' and time '7-9PM' below it. A QR code is in the top right corner. The Balcarras logo is in the top left, and the school's name and tagline 'From strength to strength' are in the bottom left. Three circular images show students in a classroom, a teacher pointing at a board, and students outdoors. A text box on the left states: 'Students from any location looking for post-16 options for September 2024 entry are very welcome to attend, no appointment necessary.'

Our open evening for 2024 entry to Balcarras Sixth Form will be held on Thursday 18th January, 7-9pm. All Year 11 families are welcome and there is no need to book a space. During the evening there will be talks from Mr Leatherbarrow, Head of Sixth Form, together with an opportunity to meet subject teachers, review the course content for all of the courses we offer, in addition to learning about all of the many extracurricular and enrichment opportunities students can participate in at Balcarras Sixth Form. We look forward to welcoming you.

Please scan the QR code for further information.

CROSS COUNTRY

MARK HARVEY, HEAD OF PE

After winning 5 out of the 8 District Team Cross Country competitions last half term at St Edwards School over 20 Balcarras pupils were chosen to represent the Cheltenham District Squad at the County Round held at Newent. Well done to Patrick Paul in Year 9 who won the junior boys race, Isaac Henderson Year 13 won the senior boys race and Olivia Avery Year 9 won the junior girls race.

With the top 6 pupils in each race being chosen to represent the County in the regional rounds a well done also to Monty Williams Year 7, 5th in the minor boys, Ben Yates Year 11, 3rd in the inter boys and Evie Avery Year 9, 5th in the junior girls races.

Good luck to all of you in the regionals.

HOCKEY

HAYLEY DAVIES, PE

The U12s won their County Tournament a couple of weeks ago! They beat Kings in the final which means they progress to the West Hockey Regional Finals in March.

U12 Hockey Squad: GK - Isla Potter, Beth Hill, Annabelle Vaughan, Kiki Price (c), Ella Mason, Matilda Lucking Belle Hacker, Leen Salahaddin, Zara Pledge-Giampaglia

(Freya Fossella was unable to attend the tournament, but she's very much a part of the team and will be coming to Regionals)



YEARBOOK 2024

AMY & ALAN SPRING WALLIS

The Yearbook VLE pages are live for year 11! They can be found in the 'Student Zone' section. Over the holidays, we need year 11s to:

- Upload photos
- Vote for the teacher and student awards
- Submit memories and 'teacherisms'

Parents! Remember when your teenagers were cute? There are pages to which you can upload baby photos and 'first day of year 7' photos, too. Any questions, please email Mrs (ajw) or Mr (asw) Spring Wallis.

JANUARY CHRISTMAS JUMPER RECYCLING

JON PEARCE, ECO CLUB

Did you get a new Christmas Jumper this year? Did you know that Between 40% and 75% of new Christmas jumpers are binned on Boxing Day. According to a local survey 1 in 3 under 35s buy a new Christmas jumper every year, this could lead to 12 million new jumpers being bought this year in the UK.

Another trend is that 95% of Christmas jumpers contain plastic, which can get released as Microfibres which then enter the water cycle. So, to combat this we have got involved with a local charity who recycle Christmas jumpers. We will be having a collection bin in school at the start of the new year, and we would like you to bring in your old Christmas jumper. These will then be stored and then next Christmas taken to local swap locations where people can swap a jumper rather than buying a new one.

Therefore, once you've enjoyed the new jumper why not recycle it? Remember a Christmas jumper is for life, not just for Christmas!

DUOLINGO FOR SCHOOLS

LEWIS FOAKES, 2ND IN MFL



The MFL department has launched Duolingo for schools and has created a virtual classroom for years 7-11, one for the sixth form and one for staff.

Over 230 people have so far signed up and have been learning French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Polish, Latin, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, German, Czech, Romanian, Korean, Swedish, and Hindi.

The average time spent on Duolingo by each student in the first week was 43 minutes and the average XP (experience points) earned was 491.

The leaderboard will be updated every Friday and is on the Modern Foreign Languages homepage of Firefly. This will include the top 3 students in each classroom and the points

they have achieved alongside the language they are learning.

If you have any questions or trouble joining, please get in touch with Mr Foakes.
Happy language learning!

If you need it in a different format, please let me know.

ANNUAL BAUBLE COMPETITION

JEN SWANEPOEL, HEAD OF DT

The Christmas bauble competition was hotly contested again this year. All entries were judged by the Heads of House, and the winners will receive Amazon vouchers. Everyone who enters will receive 5 Epraise points for their efforts. All baubles will be returned to students via tutors. Merry Christmas, all!

Winners are:

Y9, 10 and 11

Y7 and Y8

Most creative

1st: Ava Bayston

2nd: Madison Lackey

3rd: Selin Erten

Most creative

1st: Holly Bodenham

2nd: Lola Tan

3rd: Rosie Atkins

Most artistic

1st: Gabby Habben

2nd: Poppy Saxby and Bella Stow

3rd: Grace Scott-Finch

Most artistic

1st: Lucy Wilson

2nd: Kitti Luck

3rd: Anya Hunter



The competition was judged by Miss Niblett, Mrs Noble, Mrs Ford, Mrs Corinaldi, Mr Hawker and Mrs Winterbottom

Everyone who entered a bauble will be given 5 Epraise points!

Well done!

Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11

1st **2nd** **3rd**

£25 £15 £10

most creative

Ava Bayston 10S2 Madison Lackey 9F2 Selin Erten 9S1

Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11

1st **2nd** **3rd**

£25 £15 £10

most creative

Ava Bayston 10S2 Madison Lackey 9F2 Selin Erten 9S1

Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11

1st **2nd** **3rd**

£25 £15 £10

most artistic

Gabby Habben 11O2 Poppy Saxby 11S2 Grace Scott-Finch 10F1

Year 7 and Year 8

1st **2nd** **3rd**

£25 £15 £10

most creative

Holly Bodenham 8G2 Lola Tan 7F1 Rosie Atkins 8O1

Tickets will go on sale on Wednesday 10th January at 9am



Time to summon up your sense of enterprise and boldly go where no-one has gone before...



THE BALCARRAS SCHOOL QUIZ 2024

Beam me down, Scotty.

I presume the questions will all be logical.

Ticket purchasing lines open.

Shall I bring some dilithium crystals, cap'n?

Get them while you can. £8 or £15 with a fish and chip supper (Neelix's exotic recipe)

Make it so!



Accessing QUIZ:
A test of knowledge between teams as a form of entertainment.

Who will be the top crew in the Delta quadrant?



Stardate: Friday 26th January 2024
Doors open 7.00pm Launch 7.30pm

Balcarras: The Final Frontier

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

Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) @balcarras and Facebook, Facebook.com/BalcarrasSchool for updates and news about school life and events.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dominic Burt', with a horizontal line underneath.

Headteacher



All vacancies are advertised on the Balcarras Trust website:

<https://www.thebalcarrastrust.co.uk>



Teaching Assistant (Qualified)

To start as soon as possible

Grade 6-8 £19,765.41 actual salary (FTE £23,893)

For the right applicants we would consider part-time hours, but applicants must have the ability to work a full day (8:45am – 3:45pm).

Balcarras School, part of the Balcarras Trust is looking to appoint a qualified/experienced and enthusiastic Teaching Assistant to join our excellent team. You will work in a small team supporting our children with physical disabilities. The work will involve manual handling and intimate care and full training will be given on appointment.

You will assist in the educational and social development of young people at an important stage in their lives. You must have a caring demeanour, good communication skills, and be able to work flexibly with fellow professionals to support the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, including students with physical disabilities.

Ofsted assessed Balcarras in 2005, 2009 and 2014 as "Outstanding" in every category.

Application

Further information including a job description can be found in the Applicant Pack www.thebalcarrastrust.co.uk. To apply, please complete an application form and send completed application forms to jobs@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Closing Date for applications: Tuesday 9th January 2024, 9am

Interviews: Week beginning 15th January 2023

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.



Catering Assistant - Part time

Part time, hours negotiable – 9.30-2.30pm

Term time only

Immediate Start

Point 1 – £11.50 per hour

The Balcarras Catering team are looking for an enthusiastic person to work at Balcarras School, the candidate would ideally have some previous experience in a large volume catering environment, however further training will be provided. Duties will include food preparation, serving students and staff and ensuring that hygiene, health and safety procedures are adhered to.

Further information including a job description can be found in the Applicant Pack www.thebalcarrastrust.co.uk

Application

To apply please download an application form from our "how to apply" page and send completed applications forms to ic@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk further details are available by calling Ian Cole on 01242 545115.

For postal applications please address for the attention of Ian Cole, Balcarras Catering, Balcarras School, East End Road, Cheltenham, GL53 8QF

Closing date: Tuesday 9th January 2024, 9am

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.

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.



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 2024, 9am

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.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.cassandfriends.org/>



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