

Balcarras Sixth Form

2024





Daniel Morgan (Year 11 - Balcarras School)

Post-18 Plans: To study History and English at university

I chose Balcarras Sixth Form because I wanted to continue the excellent school experience that I had in the lower school as well as the fact that I always admired the Sixth Formers, especially their smart polo shirts!

I love doing my three A-level subjects: History, English and Politics and I feel that I have progressed academically in them. The opportunity for independent learning is much greater than in the lower school, as we have the ability to plan our own work and revision sessions in supervised study periods, which is so helpful to the organisation of my day. In addition to this, the NEAs (Non-Examined Assessments) which are worth twenty percent of my History and English A-levels and the EPQ allow me to research, discover and write about topics of specific interest, something which I believe is crucial for university study.

I love feeling safe and secure, as I know that there is always someone to talk to if I have a problem, whether it be my tutor, the Sixth Form team or the wider Individual Learning Department, all of whom are so friendly and approachable. Also, I have enjoyed the wide range of extracurricular activities on offer. I am the Editor of the School Magazine, have taken part in the Sixth Form debating competition, the mentoring scheme with a Year 7 pupil and have participated in the Boost programme, which has taught me skills for further learning and life. As a result of this, I have loved that the Sixth Form is a social community as well as an academic one.

I have truly loved my Sixth Form experience, from my friends to the amazing teachers! Regarding future study options, I hope to go on to university, most probably to study History and English which I am thrilled about. I have also applied to study History at Oxford at the time of writing.



Daniella Oyolu (Year 11 - Cirencester Kingshill School)

Post-18 Plans: To study International Business and Marketing at university

Joining a new school in Year 12 was quite daunting and seemed like a monumental step for me with new classmates and new teachers, but it was not as overwhelming as I thought it would be due to the massive amounts of support from my teachers and the Sixth Form team. They helped me feel comfortable enough to ask for help and provided me with the support I needed to decide what to study at university as I was unsure when I joined. Studying four subjects in Year 12 really helped me explore a variety of options before I settled on English Literature, Religion, Philosophy and Ethics and Business Studies as my three A-levels along with an EPQ. The support from my teachers was also a huge help, especially as I had not studied either Philosophy and Ethics or Business before at GCSE level.

Apart from the high academic standard upheld, Balcarras also provides lots of extracurricular activities to help students achieve a proper balance between school and social life. This includes the Games and Enrichment sessions every Wednesday in Year 12 that gave me the opportunity to meet more of my new classmates and make new friends as well. Other extracurricular activities include the mentor program, the Young Enterprise scheme, and the Bar Mock Trial, all of which provide students with excellent opportunities to develop their interests as well as contribute to the school community.

Going forward, I plan to study International Business and Marketing at university as my time in the Sixth Form really helped to develop my interest in business as opposed to law, which, before joining the Sixth Form, was what I had originally anticipated that I would go on to study at university. Overall, Balcarras has helped me thrive and has provided me with the skills and knowledge I need for my next steps.



Sonya Shevchuk (Year 11 - Vinnytsia Lyceum No. 18, Ukraine)

Post-18 Plans: To study Psychology at university

When I arrived in England, Balcarras was the only school that gladly accepted me without any GCSEs, for which I am very grateful. When I joined Balcarras Sixth Form, I faced enormous challenges in adjusting to the new English-speaking environment and keeping up the pace with other students. As a driven and resolute student, I was determined to become better and better, so I devoted a lot of time and effort to improve my language skills.

The support and guidance I received played a crucial role in helping me to bridge the gap and integrate successfully into the Balcarras school community, both academically and socially. Both I and other students from Ukraine who have joined Balcarras have found it to be a very welcoming environment, and pastoral care and student wellbeing as clearly a priority for the staff who lead the Sixth Form. Engaging in extracurricular activities aimed at supporting other Ukrainians overseas was another commitment and concern. My involvement in charity work to raise funds for communities affected by the conflict, and especially children, was my way to make a positive impact and contribute to my homeland's well-being.

In terms of my post-18 plans, I would like to pursue a psychology-based degree, because it resonates with my intentions for life the most. Many people still do not acknowledge the importance of addressing mental health issues. Therefore, I desire to raise people's awareness of psychology and the science behind it.



Tom Hagan (Year 11 - Balcarras School)

Post-18 Plans: To study Mathematics at university

I have been a student at Balcarras for 7 years, all the way through from Year 7 to Year 13 now, and I can honestly say I feel as if this was the right choice for me as it has given me a great balance of academic and social development as a student.

The teachers at Balcarras are committed to helping students achieve the grades they aim to get, and are always willing to provide help and support for those students that need it. Both the academic support, stretch and challenge, and the pastoral support are excellent. The use of student mentoring schemes helps students improve if they are struggling for any reason, and to consolidate and improve their understanding of the students who act as mentors as well. The option to study four or even five A-levels is something that really makes the school stand out, and allows for students to keep their options open going into Year 12, allowing them greater freedom in future opportunities, something that can otherwise feel pressuring or scary, as choosing only three can often fix students to a certain pathway and limit potential post-18 options.

Having just sat my MAT admissions exam with the hope of securing a place at the University of Oxford, my future plans are to go on study an MSc in Mathematics, with my current A-levels being Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Physics, and EPQ in History of Mathematics. From there I would like to go work for the ESA as I love Mathematics and space exploration, the two coming together perfectly in this job.



Welcome to Balcarras Sixth Form

A warm welcome to this guide about the courses available in the Sixth Form from September 2024.

We are proud of the opportunities we offer, based around an exciting range of courses, excellent teaching and an atmosphere of enjoyment and collaboration. This combination, along with outstanding results at A-level, has led Ofsted to judge that we are one of the best Sixth Forms in the country.

In November 2020 we were named The Sunday Times Southwest State School of the Decade in recognition of our superb academic performance over many years.

It is not just in terms of raw results that Balcarras Sixth Form excels. We have consistently achieved the highest A-level value added score for any state school in Gloucestershire, and nationally we rank amongst the highest providers.

As well as superb facilities for academic study, there is a wealth of extracurricular activities, along with consistent support and guidance throughout your two-year programme. We are very proud of the achievements of our Sixth Form students, and the contribution they make each year as Balcarras continues to strive to go from strength to strength.

I hope you will want to join us and I look forward to the contribution you can make to our success in the future.

Dominic Burke Headteacher

The Sixth Form is outstanding. The quality of teaching, leadership and what the school provides is exceptional. Students gain a very high standard in examinations. **OFSTED**

Welcome



Thank you very much for taking some time to read our new Sixth Form prospectus!

Your Sixth Form education is an exciting stage of your life and a successful and rewarding experience from 16 - 18 will unlock a world of opportunities before you. I am confident that at Balcarras you can thrive and succeed.

The quality of the teaching in the Sixth Form is exceptional and the experience you will have as a Year 12 and Year 13 student is, I believe, unrivalled. The exciting and positive atmosphere in our purpose-built Sixth Form building is tangible.

We hope that you will leave the Sixth Form as well-rounded and highly qualified adults with a clear vision of your future intentions and pathways.

At the beginning of this journey you will choose four subjects in which you have a keen interest. This can sometimes be a difficult decision and therefore your teachers, tutors and parents are on hand to guide and advise you where necessary. You may also wish to talk to the Sixth Form team, Mr Rothwell, Mr Constance, Mrs Crowley or me.

I cannot wait to meet you and discuss your plans and aspirations.

Darren Leatherbarrow Head of Sixth Form

Teachers are experts in
their subjects. **OFSTED**

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A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Sixth Form team

Mr Darren Leatherbarrow, the Head of Sixth Form, Mr Rothwell and Mr Constance, the Heads of Years 12 and 13 and members of the Senior Management Team meet with each applicant before they enter the Sixth Form to help them to make the right choices. This gives students and parents the opportunity to discuss any questions they might have.

Throughout your time in the Sixth Form, Mr Leatherbarrow, Mr Rothwell and Mr Constance will be available to offer advice on your studies and your future, and to listen to your concerns. They each have an office in the Sixth Form Centre and are the normal points of contact for parents of our students.



Mr Rothwell



Mr Constance

Tutors

Students will be in tutor groups. The role of the Sixth Form tutor is to be concerned with the welfare and academic progress of their students. Tutor groups meet as a whole, but there will also be regular individual tutorials at which your academic progress will be discussed. Tutors pay particular attention to attendance (our expectation is 100% attendance) and students will have regular feedback from your subject teachers. Students are expected not to take family holidays in school time.

A feature of Balcarras Sixth Form is our system of progress reports. In the first term you will be set target grades for each of your subjects. Progress grades are then published each term. This gives students and parents a clear and current record of academic progress.

Administrative support

Mrs Crowley provides administrative support for Sixth Form students and staff, and would be delighted to aid you in any way. Mrs Crowley also plays a crucial role in recruitment and admissions.



Mrs Crowley



Mrs Dean

Study supervision and mentoring

There are a number of additional members of the Sixth Form team who will work with you on a daily basis. Our study supervision team consists of Mr Boughton, Mrs Dean and Miss Shields. They not only supervise study in our state-of-the-art study rooms, but also monitor attendance and provide crucial academic mentoring and pastoral support in addition to our excellent tutor team and exceptional subject teachers.



Mr Boughton

Teachers

Your A-level teachers will probably be your most important contacts. After all, you are coming to the Sixth Form for academic success. They will advise you about your progress, as well as reporting regularly to your tutors and, of course, your parents. They can also be a useful source of information about careers and degree courses in your chosen area.



Miss Shields

POST-18 SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

UCAS

Progression to university is the goal of many students. Towards the middle of Year 12, personal development tutor time is dedicated to university choices and the UCAS system. Mr Boughton is our Sixth Form UCAS advisor and plays an integral role in the students Sixth Form journey.

In addition to this, Mr Leatherbarrow, Mr Rothwell and Mr Constance will be available to discuss applications with students, alongside Mr Boughton and the students' tutors.

The first half-term of Year 13 is when UCAS applications are written and sent (the school deadline is 5th December - but early applications are advised). All students use the electronic application system which makes the whole process paperless and quick. Mr Boughton will help supervise this process throughout and in addition, offers a weekly UCAS drop-in clinic.

Early entry

The Balcarras Boost programme, coordinated by Mr Niblett, offers substantial advice and preparation for university applications, particularly for students wishing to apply to Oxbridge and those students seeking to study medicine or veterinary degrees.

Information on the Oxbridge application programme plus information about grants, loans and fees will be available to parents and students during an information evening, which will take place in May of Year 12.

Apprenticeships and careers

The Head of Careers, Mrs Bull, alongside our lead Careers Advisor, Mrs Lewis, coordinate our advice service to students. Mrs Lewis runs a weekly drop-in clinic in the Sixth Form and all students are encouraged to utilise these sessions. This will continue to be an important support to students.

Reports and parents' evenings

Communication with parents is something we value. At the beginning of Year 12 an information evening is held for the parents of all new Sixth Form students. In addition to the three yearly progress reports, there is also a full written report

in Year 12. There are also parents' evenings in both years, with two for Year 13. Students are expected to attend these meetings along with their parents.

Sixth Form Councils and the Sixth Form Student Leadership Team

There is a very active student voice in Balcarras. Each half term the Year 12 and Year 13 Councils will meet to discuss issues affecting student academic progress, pastoral and welfare issues, extra-curricular opportunities, Sixth Form accommodation and uniform, and planning fun social events! Each year the student Councils make recommendations which result in positive and progressive changes to the Sixth Form.

Towards the end of Year 12, students can apply to become members of our student Sixth Form Leadership Team, who play a crucial role in representing student voice in the Sixth Form, and who play a vital role in the induction of new students into Year 12.

A-levels offered at Balcarras

Twenty-five A-levels are available. Syllabus information is available on pages 11 - 40.

Art

Biology

Business Studies

Chemistry

Computer Science

Drama and Theatre

Economics

English Literature

Environmental Science

French

Further Mathematics

Geography

History

Mathematics

Music

Photography

Physical Education

Physics

Politics

Product Design

Psychology

Religion, Philosophy and Ethics

Russian

Spanish

Textiles

We also provide vocational qualifications:

Food Science & Nutrition

Health and Social Care

THE COURSES ON OFFER

What is an A-level?

All students who apply to Balcarras are choosing to study a full suite of four A-level subjects for the entire duration of the first year. We believe that the curriculum offered at Balcarras will provide you with excellent breadth and flexibility, and enable all students to progress to their preferred post-18 destination. We ask that all applicants opt for at least four subjects because we believe that this provides the opportunity to work out what you really want to study by the end of Year 12. Surveys have shown that more than 50% of students change their minds about the three subjects with which to continue in Year 13. Most students will drop one of their subjects at the end of Year 12 and study three subjects in Year 13. No student is required to continue with all four subjects for two years, although some may be advised to continue with all four subjects depending on their university course choices. We will of course offer advice to students on their choices and any thoughts they may have about further study. Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the Sixth Form team.

Assessment

Each A-level course comprises of multiple units of work. These are usually assessed through examinations, coursework or a combination of the two. In Year 12 internal formal trial examination assessments will take place in February, and further rigorous end-of-year assessments will be held in lesson time in June - July. In Year 13 internal trial examination assessments will take place in January, and the final external examinations will take place in May - June.

A-level courses are challenging and are more demanding than GCSEs. All students will receive regular assessment and feedback throughout their courses to support their progression from GCSE to A-level. In all A-level courses grades A* to E will represent a Pass, whereas the vocational courses we offer are graded Distinction* to Pass.

Choosing your courses

When choosing your courses, you should be guided by three key factors: academic ability and aptitude; enjoyment and interest; relevance to your future career aspirations. Firstly, you should consider your academic strengths: which are your best subjects? Secondly, you should select subjects you most enjoy studying.

Thirdly, if you have a firm idea about your future career or a subject you wish to study at university, then you are strongly advised to do some careful research into which subjects are required to ensure all options remain open to you.

With four A-level courses available to you in Year 12, there is an opportunity to maintain a fairly broad curriculum. For example, you may wish to take a language alongside three science subjects, or a science subject alongside three arts and humanities subjects. Universities and employers will welcome such breadth.

Progression

Progression from Year 12 to Year 13 is not automatic. It is dependent on your progress throughout Year 12, and your examination results. If students do not gain at least a pass grade in their trial examinations in Year 12, then they may be advised not to continue that particular course to A-level and it may be that their programme of study is changed.

The vast majority of students, however, following four A-level courses in Year 12 will usually progress into Year 13 to take three A-levels. Any student wishing to continue to study all four A-levels in Year 13 may do so. The decision about which course to drop, if any, will be made at the end of Year 12. This decision will be made on the basis of discussion between the students and teachers. Parents are welcome to be involved in the discussion if they so wish.

Entry requirements

The minimum requirement for entry to Sixth Form is two grade 6's and three grade 5's to include mathematics and English. Please refer to the Balcarras website for full details.

Many subjects will require a grade 6 in that particular subject at GCSE. Details can be found on the relevant subject page.

Each year, many students apply from schools other than Balcarras. The benefits they bring to the Sixth Form, both socially and academically, are valued immensely. However, we are only able to accommodate a maximum of 50 external students.

In the event that more than 50 wish to take up a place in Year 12, students will be allocated places based on the over-subscription criteria set out on the school's website.

A RICH EXPERIENCE

Alongside your academic subjects there will be a number of other courses on your timetable:

Personal Development

This course offers a variety of elements:

- Preparation for higher education: choosing the right course, UCAS applications, money management, student accommodation
- Alternatives to higher education
- Starting a career, taking a gap year
- Study skills and tips for achieving success at A-level, including note taking, essay writing and time management

Guest speakers

The whole of Year 12 comes together once a fortnight to listen to a variety of interesting and informative guest speakers. Recent topics have included gap years opportunity, careers in film making, university finances, volunteering in Gloucestershire, safe driving and many others.

Sixth Form games and enrichment

Every Wednesday afternoon all Year 12 students take part in a sporting or other 'enrichment' activity. This is a compulsory part of the curriculum, and the aim is for every student to do some form of physical exercise or other recreational activity which they enjoy. Each student selects from a wide range of activities, which varies from term to term. A number of competitive options are available including netball, hockey, football and rugby. Fitness training or inter-school fixtures also take place during this time. More recreational options (both on-site and off-site) have included body conditioning, the use of the fitness suite, yoga, badminton, walking and table-top gaming..

Extracurricular activities

Students participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities including: The Duke of Edinburgh Award, Young Enterprise, careers-related industry visits, the paired reading scheme, 'Engage' discussion forums, the Bar Mock Trial, expeditions, debating, school music competitions, drama productions, inter-school sports matches and regular intra-tutor competitions.

Cultural visits and trips

Students will be invited onto various excursions depending on which courses they are studying. In addition, Balcarras Sixth Form offers both an annual ski trip and an annual cultural trip.

Social and enrichment opportunities

We welcome our students from other schools into Balcarras Sixth Form with a welcome brunch during the first few weeks of Year 12, in addition, all Year 12 students join in a welcome ice breaker event where they compete within their tutor groups in a variety of fun, team-bonding skills. During September, the Sixth Form team host a themed BBQ for the entire Sixth Form to enjoy, which also raises money for a chosen charity. Finally, as the students complete their journey at Balcarras Sixth Form, they are all invited to our annual Year 13 Prom, which is a formal sit-down dinner followed by dancing traditionally held in the beautiful Pittville Pump Room.



The Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE)

The DofE at Balcarras is thriving. The Sixth Form are invited to join at Gold level (no previous levels are required if this has not been done before). The Gold Award involves a physical recreation, skill, residential and volunteering section as well as a four-day expedition. Meetings are held regularly to encourage students to gain their award whilst at Balcarras and to provide support and encouragement. The expedition training is undertaken in school time with the expeditions being run in-house during the summer between Year 12 and 13 in the UK (previous expeditions have gone to the Peak District and Dartmoor). Students can use participation in other activities such as the paired mentoring scheme and their extra-curricular games towards their DofE sections.

Young Enterprise

The success of the Young Enterprise scheme at Balcarras has been exceptional. Students have formed their own companies, producing and selling a range of goods and services in recent years. Each business is judged on its trading activities, the quality of production and a financial report at the end of the year. As a team we have finished in the top two within Gloucestershire for the past ten years, winning four of the last six county competitions. We have also represented the county at the South West final on no less than four occasions.

The paired mentoring scheme

Year 12 students are invited to take part in the paired mentoring schemes run by the learning support and English and Maths departments. Students are given training by the learning support department and then paired with a Year 7 or Year 8 pupil. The student and the pupil arrange times to meet, and the Sixth Former helps the pupil with reading, literacy and numeracy. There are similar opportunities to support Y7 and Year 8 pupils at The High School Leckhampton. Paired mentoring proves to be extremely rewarding for both the mentor and the mentee.

Extended Project Qualification

The Extended Project is a Level 3 qualification and is intended to stretch and challenge students beyond their A-level choices; it is therefore highly regarded by universities and employers alike. The EPQ allows each student to embark on a self-motivated and largely independent project. The students have freedom of choice over their project's title, subject to approval by the course coordinators, and the direction of its completion; our students find this highly rewarding. See page 40 for further details about EPQ.



OUTSTANDING FACILITIES

The Sixth Form is based in its own purpose-built centre. The facilities are outstanding – with science laboratories for Sixth Form courses, and three superb information technology suites. There is a high spec drama studio and a total of twelve classrooms. Much of the Sixth Form teaching takes place in the centre – though some subjects like art and design technology take place in other parts of the school, taking advantage of specialist facilities. Business Studies and Economics are taught in our brand new Davidson Building.

Private study

We firmly believe that our supervised study facilities, which are open to students both before school from 08:00, and after school until 18:00, play a crucial role in the success of the Sixth Form. There is no doubt they help our students develop effective study routines, that it facilitates the academic progress our students make, and enhances the vibrant Sixth Form community we enjoy. Developing good

independent study habits is the most effective way to academic success in the Sixth Form. Most students will have about one hour a day private study time. There are three large study areas, with over 150 computer terminals and study carrels at which you can work. These are used for supervised private study in both Year 12 and Year 13. In addition to this, students are able to sign out of the main study facilities and conduct their private study in additional subject-specific venues such as 'The Hive' in Product Design.

Sixth Form Common Room

The common room provides a superb space in which students can socialise. It is well equipped for use by students at break and lunch, including a music system and vending machines. There are facilities for students to make their own refreshments including a kettle and microwaves. There is also a wide variety of food served to Sixth Formers in the common room at break and lunchtimes.



The Sixth Form ... has standards that are among the highest in the country. **OFSTED**

UNIFORM

The idea

The uniform, decided by consensus between staff, students, parents and governors, allows flexibility. The dress code is distinctive from that of the lower school. Sixth Form students are expected to be smartly dressed at all times and act as role models for the younger pupils at the school.

The design

A number of sixth formers were involved in agreeing the design. A feature is the Sixth Form logo - which appears on the polo shirts and jumpers.

The uniform

- Black or brown formal shoes
- Smart black or grey trousers or smart black or grey skirt
- Balcarras Sixth Form polo shirt - red, ash grey, or royal blue
- Balcarras Sixth Form Jumper in black or grey
- Belts should be black, grey or brown

Training shoes, boots, scarves, jackets or coats may not be worn in the Sixth Form. Jewellery, hair colour and make-up should be subtle. Students should see their Head of Year if they are unsure about any item.

Sixth Form games kit

- Trainers
- Boots for football and rugby
- Either shorts, track suit bottoms or leggings
- T-shirt, jumper
- Jewellery should be removed before exercise and hair tied back



Buying uniform

New polo shirts and sweatshirts are available from Monkhouse. Gently-worn uniform is also available from Mrs Crowley in the Sixth Form office.

ART

Syllabus title:

Art (Fine art)

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Unit 1	Portfolio unit supported by 1,000-3,000 words	60% of A-level
Unit 2	Practical examination	15 hrs 40% of A-level

Studying A-level art

The course is sympathetic with the structure of GCSE art. It revolves around units of coursework and controlled tests set against four assessment objectives. As with GCSE art, much of the practical work is triggered by critical studies with written research acting as a diary of work undertaken. Students can work in a range of media including painting, mixed media, printmaking and sculpture. All work will be internally marked, and then moderated by AQA. The controlled test in Year 12 should be seen as an opportunity for developing ideas and in Year 13 to develop a more fully realised project.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved a grade 6 in GCSE art. Students must demonstrate some proficiency in their use of written English, especially helpful at A-level. Consideration can be given to students who achieve a level 5 at GCSE depending on their portfolio.



BIOLOGY

Syllabus title:

Biology

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Covers topics 1-4	2 hrs	35% of total marks
Paper 2	Topics 5-8	2 hrs	35% of total marks
Paper 3	Topics 1-8 and the relevant practical skills	2 hrs	30% of total marks

Studying A-level biology

We deliver the AQA biology syllabus. It is an ideal course for students who really enjoy biology and want to explore all the different facets of the subject.

Biology at A-level is stimulating, demanding and challenging. We cover many different topics from human disease, to animal physiology, plant physiology, new gene technologies and the biochemistry of cells and processes. Prospective students will need to be good at applying knowledge and understanding to novel situations whilst displaying a high level of literacy and numeracy – at least 10% of the marks at A-level will come from the use of maths skills taught in higher tier GCSE maths. Students will also complete a series of set practicals chosen by AQA. The skills developed in this course have enabled past students to successfully follow higher education courses in medicine, midwifery, veterinary sciences, zoology, biology, biochemistry, marine biology, forestry and ecology.

8 topics are covered at A-level:

- 1 - Biological molecules
- 2 - Cells
- 3 - Organisms exchange substances with their environment
- 4 - Genetic information, variation and relationships between organisms
- 5 - Energy transfers in and between organisms
- 6 - Organisms respond to changes in their internal and external environments
- 7 - Genetics, populations, evolution and ecosystems
- 8 - The control of gene expression

A field day is also organised for the September of Year 13. All students studying the full biology A-level must attend this trip as it covers important aspects of topic 5 and 7 as well as a required practical.

Entry requirements

Students wishing to take biology should have a grade 6 or above in biology or combined science and a grade 6 in maths.

BUSINESS

Syllabus title:

Business studies

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Business 1: Strategic Decisions	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 2	Business 2: Managing Strategic Change	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 3	Business 3: Business in Context	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level

Studying A-level business

The course is an excellent overview of the different skills needed in a business environment. It introduces key theories and then tests them in a real world situation. The emphasis of the course is on the relevance of business theory to businesses in practice. Students will learn a variety of decision-making techniques and apply these in examination conditions.

The course also places an emphasis on developing entrepreneurship skills and giving students the confidence to set up and run their own company in the future. This is a major government initiative and all students in business are encouraged to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different business operations.

Entry requirements

Successful A-level business students need to have good communication skills and be confident using numbers.

Students do not need to have studied business at GCSE level but if they have they must have a minimum of a grade 5 to take the course at A Level.



CHEMISTRY

Syllabus title:
Chemistry A

Examination board:
OCR



A-level

Paper 1	Periodic Table, Elements and Physical Chemistry	100 marks and is split into two sections and assesses content from teaching modules 1, 2, 3 and 5	2 hrs	37% of total A-level
Paper 2	Synthesis and Analytical Techniques	100 marks and is split into two sections and assesses content from teaching modules 1, 2, 4 and 6	2 hrs	37% of total A-level
Unit 3	Unified Chemistry	70 marks across all teaching modules 1 to 6	1 hrs	26% of total A-level

Studying A-level chemistry

Chemistry develops experimental skills and increases a student's ability to handle, apply and evaluate information as well as extend their knowledge and understanding of scientific theories and applications. The students will discover how and why the atoms and molecules that make up every chemical react and behave. This enables students to have a greater awareness of the way the material world works. Chemistry will be a stimulating, highly academic challenge as well as a course full of exciting and varied activity. It is worth noting that chemistry is essential for students wishing to pursue a career in medicine, veterinary science, dentistry or pharmacy.

The Year 12 course is divided into four teaching modules.

Module 1 - Development of practical skills in chemistry

Module 2 - Foundations in chemistry

Module 3 - Periodic table and energy

Module 4 - Core organic chemistry

In Year 12 learners study modules 1 to 4 and continue with modules 5 and 6 in Year 13. The internally assessed Practical Endorsement skills also form part of the full A-level.

Module 5 - Physical chemistry and transition elements

Module 6 - Organic chemistry and analysis

Within A-level chemistry, 20% of the marks available within written examinations will be for assessment of mathematics.

Entry requirements

Students wishing to take chemistry should have a grade 6 or above in chemistry or combined science and a grade 6 in maths.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Syllabus title:

Computer Science

Examination board:

OCR

A-level

Unit 1	Computer Systems	2 hrs written paper	140 marks	40% of total A-level
Unit 2	Algorithms and Programming	2 hrs written paper	140 marks	40% of total A-level
Unit 3	Programming Project	Non exam assessment	70 marks	20% of total A-level

Studying A-level computer science

Computer science is a challenging subject that asks students to think in a computational way. There is an emphasis on abstract thinking, problem solving and reasoning using analytical, logical and creative skills.

The course itself is very demanding and covers computing fundamentals, looking in depth at computer architecture, programming and internet technologies.

It is an excellent way to prepare for degree-level study in areas such as computer science, programming, software and systems design or engineering. It is also effective as career entry and industry preparation.

Entry requirements

For students wishing to take computer science, a minimum grade 6 in GCSE mathematics and a 6 in GCSE computer science (or equivalent) are both essential. All applications will be considered on an individual basis.

DRAMA & THEATRE

Syllabus title:

Drama & Theatre

Examination board:

Edexcel

A-level				
Component 1	Devising	40% NEA (coursework based)	Students devise a piece of theatre influenced by study of an established practitioner which they then perform. They record and reflect upon their work in a portfolio.	Internally assessed and externally moderated.
Component 2	Text in Performance	20%	Students produce a group performance from a play. They also present a separate performance of a monologue or duologue.	Assessed by a visiting examiner.
Component 3	Theatre Makers in Practice	40% written exam	Based on theatre visits, practical and theoretical study. This paper comprises 3 sections covering live theatre and questions on two set texts.	Exam 2 hours 30 mins.

Studying A-level drama and theatre

This course allows students plenty of opportunities to combine practical and academic approaches. Students will study set texts and the work of several practitioners. Skills and insights will be developed through individual study and group projects, performing scripted pieces and producing original work. Please note that there is a requirement to attend professional theatre productions and workshops, some of which will probably be in the evening.

To be a high achiever in drama, candidates are expected to work co-operatively and sensitively with others. Students should also be able to give up significant

time outside school hours, and to have a genuine interest in drama. A willingness to experiment with new ideas and a sense of fun are also very important.

Entry requirements

It is not necessary for students to have studied GCSE drama to take A-level drama and theatre, although the course does revisit and build upon skills gained at KS4. Students should have achieved a grade 5 in English GCSE. If they have studied GCSE Drama then a minimum grade 5 is also expected here. However, at least as important as these requirements are genuine commitment and self-motivation.

ECONOMICS

Syllabus title:

Economics

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Markets and Market Failure	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 2	The National & International Economy	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 3	Economic Principles and Issues	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level

Studying A-level economics

Economics A-level provides a very good grounding in economic and strategic thinking which will provide students with a solid foundation in economic awareness and understanding. The course encourages students to develop an understanding of economic concepts and theories through a critical consideration of current economic issues. It also expects students to apply economic concepts and theories in a range of contexts and to appreciate their values and limitations in explaining real-world phenomena.

Note: Many universities require students applying for an economics degree to have gained an A-level in mathematics or further mathematics.

Entry requirements

Successful A-level economics students need to have good communication skills and be confident using numbers. Consequently, a GCSE grade 6 in either English Language or English Literature and mathematics are necessary.

Students do not need to have studied business studies or economics at GCSE-level.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Syllabus title:

English Literature

Examination board:

Edexcel

A-level

Component 1:	Drama* Section A: Shakespeare (Othello) Section B: A Streetcar Named Desire (Tennessee Williams)	2 Hours and 15 Minutes	30%
Component 2:	Prose* Students write one essay comparing the novels Frankenstein by Mary Shelley and The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood	1 Hour and 15 Minutes	20%
Component 3:	Poetry* Section A: Poems of the Decade (post-2000) Section B: Victorian Poetry (pre-1900)	2 Hours and 15 Minutes	30%
Component 4:	Coursework Students will write a coursework essay comparing two thematically linked texts of their choice (either prose, poetry, drama or literary non-fiction).		20%

*All exams are open book which means that clean copies of the texts (texts with no notes on) can be taken into the exam.

Studying A-level English Literature

If you have enjoyed English at GCSE, then you will love A-level English Literature. A-level English is the perfect opportunity to sit and discuss books with other like-minded students and to be guided in your discussions by dedicated teachers who remember clearly how exciting it was to be learning about these things for the first time. No-one ever forgets their A-level texts as the characters and themes will stay with you forever.

Lessons will be structured in a variety of ways. Sometimes your teacher will tell you things about the text, about the context behind it or about the range of different approaches that critics have taken on it. At times they will want you to work in groups to share and present your opinions and at others they will ask you to explore your own ideas individually in a detailed essay. The best lessons are those where students discuss, reflect and challenge and as the course goes on, become increasingly independent.

This is a challenging, modern and academic course which is extremely well regarded by universities and employers. A facilitating course, A-level English will broaden the range of degree courses that you will be able to apply for. The qualification demonstrates that you are a skilled reader and an adept writer with the ability to evaluate an opinion, the skills to argue a viewpoint and the imagination to empathise with another's situation. As such it is a highly valued A-level for professions such as law, journalism, media, theatre and business.

Entry requirements

English Literature A-level will stretch you both critically and creatively, but to get the most out of the course students must have a genuine love of both reading and writing. Entrance on to the course requires a minimum of at least a grade 6 in both English Language and English Literature.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

Syllabus title:

A-level Environmental Science

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	3 hrs written paper	50%
Paper 2	3 hrs written paper	50%

Studying A-level environmental science

Students who enjoy a multi-disciplinary approach to learning and have a keen interest in the sustainability of our planet will find this course engaging and thought-provoking. Environmental science is a holistic subject with many interconnected systems and processes. A change to one process can affect many other processes over different spatial and temporal scales. Consideration of environmental issues and the conclusions reached should be based on reliable evidence-based information and quantitative data. Students will develop an understanding of how human society relies upon natural systems for resources and life support systems.

What will I study?

1. The physical environment
2. Energy resources
3. Pollution
4. The living environment
5. Biological resources
6. Sustainability
7. Research methods

Learners will study all modules.

Students will be expected to draw on knowledge and understanding of the entire course of study to show a deeper understanding of the interconnections between topics.

Questions will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer and extended writing questions.

Career Opportunities:

- Environmental Consultant
- Marine Biologist
- Sustainability Consultant
- Environmental Manager
- Recycling Officer
- Waste Management Officer

Entry requirements

GCSE grade 5 in maths and English and grade 5-5 in combined science or grade 5 in biology and chemistry in triple science.

FOOD SCIENCE & NUTRITION

Syllabus title:
Food Science & Nutrition

Examination board:
WJEC

Year 12 Certificate in Food Science and Nutrition

Unit Number	Unit Title	Assessment
1	Meeting Nutritional Needs of Specific Groups	Internal: practical and written assessment External: 1 hour written exam

Year 13 Diploma in Food Science and Nutrition

2	Ensuring Food is Safe to Eat	Externally marked - eight hour timed, supervised assessment
3	Experimenting to Solve Food Production Problems	Internal: responding through investigative and experimental work to a scenario based on a food production problem

Studying food science and nutrition

An understanding of food science and nutrition is relevant to many industries and job roles. Care providers and nutritionists in hospitals use this knowledge, as do sports coaches and fitness instructors. Hotels and restaurants, food manufacturers and government agencies also use this understanding to develop menus, food products and policies that support healthy eating initiatives.

The WJEC Level 3 Food Science and Nutrition qualification allows pupils to gain a wealth of knowledge about the food and nutrition industry. Students will have the opportunity to learn about the relationship between the human body and food as well as practical skills for cooking and preparing food. It has been

designed to provide pupils with knowledge, understanding and skills to progress to further study and training. It is assessed through a combination of coursework, written examinations and timed extended assignments.

Entry requirements

Pupils must have studied GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition and have obtained a minimum grade 5 or GCSE Design Technology subject (product design or textiles) and have obtained a minimum grade 6. Sound ICT skills would also be advantageous. If you are considering a long-term career, a science-based subject may also be beneficial.



Hanna Mohamed-Ali (Year 11 - Balcarras School)

Post-18 Plans: To study Economics at university

I chose Balcarras to carry on my academic journey as I had attended secondary school here from Year 7 to Year 11, and had such a positive experience that I wanted to carry on at Sixth Form – there was no incentive to move elsewhere when I knew what I wanted and needed to succeed was here. I love the facilities that are provided for the Sixth Form students here at Balcarras, and especially the independent study rooms – both the main study rooms, and in particular 'The Hive' in Product Design. All the teachers are welcoming and clearly have a passion for the subject they teach; they encourage you to ask questions or see them one-on-one if you are struggling with any topic which I feel is extremely beneficial, whether it is to challenge you to go beyond on a task or project, or to support and guide you if you are finding an aspect of the course difficult.

I have been able to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including being a part of the school netball team, playing in matches against other schools. I also had the opportunity to be a part of a Women in Stem engineering mentoring scheme which was an incredibly rewarding and worthwhile experience, and one which I thoroughly enjoyed. I am very thankful for all these valuable experiences that I was able to be a part of – and am well aware of the skills they have helped me develop which will make my journey beyond Balcarras post-18 that bit easier to navigate.

After Sixth Form, ultimately, I plan to go to university to study economics, though I would love to work and travel as well.



Oscar Wills-Johnson (Year 11 - Pittville School)

Post 18-Plans: To pursue a Degree Apprenticeship in Cyber Security or Finance

As Pittville School does not have a Sixth Form, Balcarras had always been the aspirational destination for me. This became very clear in Year 11 when I began exploring post-16 options and very quickly I had my mind set on coming here. From the amazing facilities to a wide range of extracurricular activities, it was obvious that Balcarras has a lot to offer.

When I joined, I wanted to study Computer Science, however I did not have a GCSE in the subject as it was not available at Pittville. After speaking to the Head of Computer Science, Mr Cooper, I was provided with some summer work to establish some necessary skills in the subject and was allowed to enrol. It was challenging at first, having not taken the subject prior to A-level, but with the support from my teachers, which I soon realised was typical of the provision here, and some extra work at home, I caught up quickly. I am very happy to have chosen the subject and am planning to pursue it as my future career.

In Year 12, I joined the Young Enterprise programme due to an interest in entrepreneurship. Even though we did not win the competition, I developed a lot of interpersonal skills; I learnt a lot about the business world that you cannot learn in a classroom and gained confidence in public speaking. I would highly recommend Young Enterprise to any new students.

In the future, I plan on doing a degree apprenticeship in cyber security. The idea of university had never been appealing to me, which left me feeling lost in what to do next. However, the careers guidance at Balcarras is excellent, and I found that with a Degree-level Apprenticeship you not only receive the necessary qualifications, but also receive lots of in-industry experience whilst earning a salary.



Oliver Shelton (Year 11 - Winchcombe School)

Post-18 Plans: To study Economics at university

When first joining Balcarras Sixth Form, I thought the transition to a new school would be a difficult step, however I found it very easy to settle in at Balcarras. At Balcarras, the school manages to maintain a really good balance between an enjoyable community and atmosphere, as well as supporting and challenging students to make excellent academic performance.

In Year 12, students begin the year with four A-levels which has proved to be extremely valuable for me. Towards the end of Year 12, I began to form a plan of what sort of career path I wanted to pursue, and I realised that one of the subjects which I was set on taking at the beginning of Year 12, was no longer essential and did not fit in with these plans. Due to me taking a fourth A-level, I was able to drop this subject and carry on with a more relevant and appropriate fourth subject instead, which I would have never taken had I joined another Sixth Form.

The Sixth Form team put a huge amount of time and effort into guiding every student through the UCAS and post-18 application process, or exploring alternative career pathways if they are more relevant to them. There is always opportunity – two I have participated in have included the visit to the UCAS Convention to prepare for university applications, and also an apprenticeship visit to Old Trafford, hosted by Kohler-Mira.

Balcarras has been the perfect step for me between lower school and university, and I would recommend it to students planning to move from other schools at the end of Year 11.



Anuska Koochin (Year 11 - Scripps Ranch High School, San Diego, USA)

Post-18 Plans: To study Psychology at university

Having to move continents halfway through my academic journey was one of the most difficult things I have ever had to endure and overcome. The culture changes, the difference between schooling systems, it was all a shock to the system. Out of all my options during preparations for my move, Balcarras had made the best impression, considering I wasn't physically able to visit until the day before Year 12 started.

During Year 12, I struggled massively academically, especially in A-level Maths. I then managed to climb my way from the very bottom to the top (from a U to an A). I could not have done this without the amazing pastoral support offered in the Sixth Form, whom of which I have never hesitated to go to for emotional help thanks to their welcoming, helpful, and caring energy. Furthermore, the academic support and guidance from subject teachers has been equally substantial and valuable.

During my time at Balcarras so far, I have managed to participate in multiple extra-curricular opportunities given by the school. Two of my favourites would be the Sixth Form Debate competition in which my tutor group team, and being a 'maths buddy', where I was able to help a Year 7 with their difficulties in maths. Both experiences have helped me to grow as a person, and I am sure that Year 13 will prove to offer me opportunities just as successful.

After Year 13, I plan to take a gap year, then leading to a deferral entry for a Psychology BSc university course. I am very grateful for my opportunity to join Balcarras Sixth Form, as the school has been amazingly supportive, both academically and pastorally, while also managing to make these difficult school years easier to navigate.



Hebe Steggle (Year 11 - Pittville School)

Post-18 Plans: To have a gap year with travel then study Drama and Theatre at university

As a student who had studied at a different school before Sixth Form, Balcarras has always stood out to me as an environment full of incredible opportunities. Not only did Balcarras appeal to me as a supportive and inclusive school, having visited Open Evening, the level of awareness and understanding of the teachers, not to mention the vibrant community, made Balcarras the most appealing option for me.

Despite the challenges Sixth Form can have, I feel that Balcarras has crafted a safe space for their students, enabling their students to progress both academically and socially. The first time I entered Balcarras, I instantly felt a connection with the school. The teachers are approachable and made a real effort to get to know their students, and constantly encourage you.

Joining a school which advocates positivity, self-improvement, and community has helped me feel confident enough for the next steps in my education. Balcarras Sixth Form is one which is really collaborative, and has given a voice to those who might otherwise feel unheard. With a brilliant range of extra-curricular opportunities, students have the chance to create their own pathway through education. The Sixth Form leadership team, for example, has allowed me to voice my opinions, speak in groups confidently, and connect with new people.

I have really been able to focus my A-level studies on the subjects that truly interest me, and the chance to study four subjects in Year 12 really does keep options open. Furthermore, the facilities at Balcarras have made it possible to get a real insight into working and collaborating with professionals whilst being treated and an adult myself, with respect and support.



Fern Hemmingway (Year 11 - Balcarras School)

Post-18 Plans: To study Dentistry at university

When I began looking at options for where to study my A-levels, I considered other Sixth Forms and colleges, but it soon became clear that the best option for me was to continue at Balcarras. Having enjoyed my time here from Year 7 to Year 11, nowhere else I visited compared with the positive, friendly atmosphere and engaging teaching that I had experienced at Balcarras.

I am glad I stayed, as my experience has only improved. I have been able to get involved in a range of wider opportunities from mentoring younger students, to being a STEM ambassador. These experiences were not only rewarding at the time but also really useful to include when writing my personal statement and preparing for university applications and studies beyond Balcarras.

The opportunity to take four A-levels rather than three during Year 12 was also beneficial as it helped me make a more informed decision as to which subjects were right for me. At Balcarras, you can also complete an EPQ alongside your A-levels. This is a good opportunity that allows you to develop essay writing techniques as well as independence as it is a self-driven project. These are skills that are important at university, but also help to develop and showcase all the key skills one would want if applying for a job or apprenticeship too.

The teachers at Balcarras are very supportive and encourage you to contact them if you need help understanding subject content or want guidance about future plans. In conclusion, Balcarras has helped me to develop, both academically and as a person. I hope to study dentistry at university and feel my time in Sixth Form has really prepared me for this.



Rex Rocco-Devoy (Year 11 - Balcarras School)

Post-18 Plans – To study Engineering at university

I had never really thought about going anywhere other than Balcarras for Sixth Form. Since Year 7, I have enjoyed my time here and I knew I wanted to stay at Balcarras for my A-Levels. The change from GCSEs can feel like a step up in level – in terms of the quantity of work expected, the quality and sophistication of the work expected, and the expectation that students use their independent study effectively - but the teachers at Balcarras are supportive and always happy to answer questions. I studied Maths, Further Maths, Physics and Geography in Year 12, and have decided to keep all four instead of taking the option to drop a subject in Year 13. I enjoy the problem solving challenged experienced in all these subjects, and also the contrast that a studying a humanities subject brings. I usually have one study lesson per day where I try to finish some of the homework I receive in lessons.

In Year 12, I played on the school basketball and football teams which were a good way to have a break from school work and to meet new people. If sport is not your outlet, there are plenty of other clubs, societies, and opportunities available – and if the Sixth Form isn't offering something you are interested in, the student voice at Balcarras is great and you can be confident in asking for any new initiative, enrichment activity, club or society to be explored.

This year, during the UCAS applications, the teachers have been really helpful – supporting and providing references for outreach opportunities, proof-reading personal statement drafts, and providing support for university admissions tests. I plan to study engineering at university next year and I am confident that I will be well prepared for it. Overall, my experience in the Sixth Form has been very positive and one I would endorse to anyone considering A-level studies.



Ruby Luckett (Year 11 - Cotswold School)

Post-18 Plans – To study Anthropology and International Relations at university

I originally joined Balcarras at the start of Year 12, having previously completed my GCSEs at the Cotswolds School, and I found my transition to Balcarras so much easier than I expected. Before enrolling at Balcarras I didn't know anyone, and if honest, was a little nervous, but I found the students and staff to be so friendly, and beyond that, the teachers were incredibly helpful in terms of both academic and pastoral support. I found that the teachers and support network around the school were so much more helpful and supportive than I'd ever expected.

Before going to Balcarras, I haven't believed I could go to university, but the skills, advice and encouragement of the Sixth Form team have allowed me to pursue this goal. At the moment, I am studying Psychology, Philosophy and Politics A-levels and I am finding them extremely engaging and exciting. There has been a huge array of enrichment activities, trips and talks around the school, delivered in PHSE, Speaker and assemblies, or trips such as the UCAS Convention, all of which have vital when it came to preparing a university application, and writing my personal statement. All have made my experience at the school exciting and unique in comparison to what I might have experienced elsewhere. For example, I had the opportunity to go on a residential trip to Berlin during Year 12, which was a once in a lifetime experience and was so much fun. We have also welcomed various speakers which have helped to give career ideas, such as the Ambassador of the UK to the US.

I have applied to the University of Cambridge, as well as St Andrews, Birmingham, Exeter, and Sussex, and have received some exciting offers for the course in Anthropology and International Relations which I look forward to studying next year.

FRENCH

Syllabus title:
French A Level

Examination board:
AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Listening, Reading & Writing	50% of A-level
Paper 2	Writing	20% of A-level
Paper 3	Speaking	30% of A-level

Studying A-level French

A-level French builds upon the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking which you have developed during your GCSE course. It will also extend your knowledge and understanding of France and other French speaking countries in the world, French life and culture.

In addition a good grasp of grammatical concepts will become increasingly important as you learn how the language works in order to produce accurate written and spoken French.

We use a range of up-to-date sources such as the Internet, magazines, radio and television. Students will also be encouraged to make use of such resources independently. You will learn how to use French in everyday conversation as well as in formal discussion and debate. A French assistant is employed so that students can have one-to-one speaking sessions for half an hour per week. You will gain a clearer insight into how language works and you will also have the opportunity to visit France and to take part in theatre visits and other cultural activities.

The course will interest students who are curious about life in other countries. French as a foreign language is the second most frequently taught language in the world after English. The International Organization of Francophone has 56 member states and governments. Of these, 28 countries have French as an official language. French is the only language other than English spoken on five continents, making it a truly global language.

French would open up the global market as it is the official language of a number of international organisations, such as the United Nations, UNESCO, NATO, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Olympic Committee, the European Union and the International Red Cross.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved at least a grade 6 at GCSE level in French.

FURTHER MATHEMATICS

Syllabus title:
Further mathematics

Examination board:
Edexcel



A-level

Paper 1	Core Pure Mathematics 1	1 hrs	25% of A-level
Paper 2	Core Pure Mathematics 2	1 hrs	25% of A-level
Paper 3	Further Statistics	1 hrs	25% of A-level
Paper 4	Further Mechanics	1 hrs	25% of A-level

Studying A-level further mathematics

Further mathematics would suit good mathematicians wishing to broaden their mathematics repertoire - further pure, further statistics and further mechanics being on offer, complementing the pure and applied offered in single maths. Students wishing to study engineering, physics or mathematics at university ought to consider this option very carefully. You may choose further maths as either a fourth or fifth A-level subject.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved a grade 8 at GCSE-level in mathematics. Students who have taken AO mathematics or any other further GCSE qualification would be well suited to this course but this is not essential. Students choosing further maths must also choose maths as one of their other A-level subjects.

GEOGRAPHY

Syllabus title:
Geography

Examination board:
AQA

A-level

Component 1	Physical Geography	2½ hours	120 marks	40% of A-level
Component 2	Human Geography	2½ hours	120 marks	40% of A-level
Component 3	Geographical Investigation	3,000–4,000 words	60 marks	20% of A-level

Studying A-level geography

"There has never been a better or more important time to study geography. With growing interest in issues such as climate change, migration, environmental degradation and social cohesion, geography is one of the most relevant courses you could choose to study. Geographers are also highly employable. Whatever your passion for the world - fascination with landscapes or concerns about inequality - geography will provide you with knowledge and transferable skills that will reward you personally and advance you professionally." Dr Rita Gardner, Director of the RGS-IBG.

Through the study of the subject we aim to develop an appreciation of the dynamic nature of geography with an interactive approach that examines the relationship between people and their environments. Equal importance is placed upon physical and human contexts, with an awareness of environmental issues and the application of geographical and fieldwork skills. Geography involves a variety of IT, field and laboratory analytical approaches including mastering techniques such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS). All of these skills are an integral part of the course. Prospective students should have an enquiring mind about landscapes

and the world around them whilst displaying a high level of literacy and numeracy.

There will be a variety of field day visits throughout the course to ensure that pupils can apply their learning and have the opportunity to experience data collection methods in preparation for the geographical investigation. A weekend residential to Dorset is an integral part of the A-level experience.

The department also runs a biennial residential trip; past destinations have included Iceland, North America and Italy. Each year the department has a range of successful students who decide to go on to study geography at a higher level. The skills from the course have enabled students to successfully study courses from oceanography, geology, geography, natural sciences, international development and urban planning.

A subscription to 'Geographical' magazine is recommended to supplement students' learning during the course, and we also encourage students to regularly read from wider sources in order to support their studies (full reading lists will be provided).

Entry requirements

Students will need to achieve a grade 6 at full course GCSE-level in geography.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Syllabus title:

OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate in Health and Social Care (equivalent to one A-level in Health and Social Care)

OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Diploma in Health and Social Care (equivalent to two A-levels in Health and Social Care)

This qualification will provide learners with the opportunity, through applied learning, to develop the core specialist knowledge, skills and understanding required in the health and social care sector. Learners will take units which provide the breadth of knowledge, understanding and skills to prepare them to study in a Higher Education Institution either on a health and social care-related degree course or to support an application for a range of other degree courses.

By the end of the two year course learners will have studied:

- Building positive relationships in health and social care
- Equality, diversity and rights in health and social care
- Health, safety and security in health and social care
- Anatomy and physiology for health and social care

Learners will also study two optional coursework units which will be decided by learners in Year 13.

This qualification is for learners who want to gain a deeper understanding of the industry. It allows learners a greater opportunity to complete coursework units as 46% of the final grade is made up of coursework marks. In addition to the units listed above learners studying the Technical Diploma will also take the following units:

- Infection control
- Personalisation and person-centred approach to care
- Safeguarding

Learners on this course will also study five optional coursework units over the two year course.

Entry requirements

Students do not need to have studied health and social care in Key Stage 4.

HISTORY

Syllabus title:

History

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Unit 1	Industrialisation and the People: Britain, 1783-1885	2½ hours	40%
Unit 2	The American Dream: Reality and Illusion, 1945-1980	2½ hours	40%
Unit 3	Historical Investigation	Non-exam assessment	20%

Studying A-level history

A-level history is a diverse course which allows students to study both British and world history. Small parts of our studies should be familiar to students from GCSE but there is plenty of new material to get stuck into! Unit 1 focuses on British history in the 18th and 19th century and looks at the great social, political and economic changes of that time period. Britain went through a massive transformation that led to it being the most powerful country in the world. Our course seeks to explore those changes in detail over the course of a 100-year period.

In unit 2 we turn our attention to a depth study in American history. The USA often boasts that it is the “land of the free”; however there has been a long history of prejudice and discrimination. Our study looks at the developments under

several Presidents in the second half of the 20th century.

Finally unit 3 involves an independent investigation that consists of a 3,500-4,500 word essay which looks at a historical question in the context of a 100-year period. This is an exciting new development in A-level history and gives plenty of opportunity for independent research and original thinking. The investigation element will allow students to pick a topic from a range of options in the second year.

Entry requirements

It is expected that A-level students will have achieved a grade 6 in history or better at GCSE-level. Students who have not studied GCSE history before are also welcome but we would expect them to have achieved a grade 6 minimum in English.

MATHEMATICS

Syllabus title:

Mathematics

Examination board:

Edexcel

A-level

Paper 1	Pure Mathematics	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 2	Pure Mathematics	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 3	Statistics and Mechanics	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level

Studying A-level mathematics

Mathematics at A-level is a course worth studying in its own right as well as serving as useful support for many other subjects. It is challenging but interesting and is a sought-after qualification for courses in higher education and for a variety of careers. The material builds on work that you will have met at GCSE but also involves new ideas that some of the greatest minds of the millennium have produced. Mathematics is a two year course consisting of pure mathematics (2/3) and applied mathematics (1/3). The pure mathematics builds on the algebra and problem solving from GCSE. Statistics allows students to analyse data and interpret probabilities. Mechanics is a branch of mathematics that deals with forces and motion. All students study both statistics and mechanics.

Entry requirements

Students must have achieved a grade 7 at GCSE-level in mathematics. An understanding and an enjoyment of algebra together with a neat, detailed and methodical style of working is a good indication of likely success at advanced level.



MUSIC

Syllabus title:

Music

Examination board:

WJEC Eduqas

A-level

Component 1 Performing	Option A: Minimum three pieces; 10-12 minutes total length	35%
	Option B: Minimum two pieces; 6-8 minutes total length	25%
Component 2 Composing	Option A: Two pieces; 4-6 minutes total length	25%
	Option B: Three pieces; 8-10 minutes total length	35%
Component 3 Appraising	Exam: 2 hrs 15	40%

Studying A-level music

The music A-level course is an exciting and challenging balance of theory and practice, allowing individual students to develop all aspects of musicianship through appraising, performing and composing. The appraising is taught through three areas of study.

The first area of study is 'Area of Study A: The Western Classical Tradition' and includes one set work (Symphony No.104 in D major, 'London' by Haydn). The second is 'Area of Study D: Jazz 1920-1950' which covers various aspects of jazz such as Ragtime, Dixieland, Big Band and Bebop. The third is Area of Study E: Into the Twentieth Century and will include two set works.

Appraising is assessed through a written examination that will include set work analysis with a score, comparison questions, questions on unprepared extracts of music with and without the score and extended response questions. Performing and composing are both non-exam components.

With a music A-level, students can progress into further education, higher education or employment. Music can be studied at many colleges and universities including highly acclaimed music colleges such as The Birmingham Conservatoire and The Royal Academy of Music. However, music A-level is highly regarded by all colleges and universities even for students wanting to follow a non-music course. Career pathways are wide and varied and include music teaching, whether instrumental or classroom based, sound-engineer, choreography, music publishing, backing singing, classical music, arts administration, television and radio production, stage or screen work, radio presenting, music journalism, music therapist, composing, events management, festival organisation and stage management.

Throughout A Level music, students will get the opportunity to attend concerts, take part in regular public performances at Pittville Pump Rooms and other venues, and will be involved in the links we have as a school - including the Cheltenham Jazz Festival, Cheltenham International Film Festival and more. This will allow them to develop their skills as a musician and experience the music industry first-hand.

Entry requirements

Students must have achieved a grade 6 or above at GCSE and have theoretical skills equivalent to grade 5 or above and performance skills of grade 4 or above. It is a requirement of the course that students are having lessons on their specialist instrument, whether in school or privately. A-level students are expected to participate fully in the extracurricular programme offered by the music department.

Students need to be open minded to a wide range of musical genres, particularly for the appraising component but also in composing and performing tasks.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Syllabus title:
Photography

Examination board:
AQA

A-level		
Unit 1	Portfolio unit supported by 1,000-3,000 words	60% of A-level
Unit 2	Practical examination	15 hrs 40% of A-level

Studying A-level photography

The course is structured similarly to GCSE art. It revolves around units of coursework and controlled tests set against four assessment objectives. As with GCSE art, much of the practical work is triggered by critical studies with written research acting as a diary of work undertaken. Students will respond to a range of stimuli including natural form, landscape and portraiture. Students will also have the opportunity to develop more conceptual approaches to this medium. Candidates must have their own digital camera. A knowledge of Adobe Photoshop® is useful but not absolutely essential. All work will be internally

marked and moderated by AQA. The controlled test in Year 12 should be seen as an opportunity for developing ideas and in Year 13 to develop a more fully realised project.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved a grade 6 in GCSE art. Students must demonstrate some proficiency in their use of written English, especially helpful at A-level. In some cases candidates with a grade 5 may be considered. Students who have not undertaken GCSE art will be asked to show a portfolio of photographs taken.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Syllabus title:

Physical education

Examination board:

OCR

A-level

Component 1	Physiological Factors Affecting Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied A&P • Ex physiology • Biomechanics 	90	2hr	30%
Component 2	Psychological Factors Affecting Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill acquisition • Sports psychology 	60	1hr	20%
Component 3	Socio-cultural Issues in Physical Activity and Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports & society • Contemporary issues in physical activity & sport 	60	1hr	20%
Component 4	Performance in Physical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance coaching • Evaluation of performance for improvement 	60	NEA	30%

Studying A-level physical education

The course provides progression from GCSE and a sound foundation for study in higher education. A-level PE is becoming an essential qualification for higher education in physical education and sports studies. The course provides an excellent foundation for students intending to pursue careers in teaching and coaching, the leisure industry, recreational management, the health and fitness industry and professional sport.

Entry requirements

Students will normally be expected to have GCSE grade 6 or above in PE and a grade 5 in science. Those who have not studied GCSE PE will be considered if they have reached a high standard in one sport.

PHYSICS

Syllabus title:

Physics

Examination board:

Edexcel

A-level

Paper 1	Further Mechanics Electric and Magnetic Fields Nuclear and Particle Physics	30%
Paper 2	Thermodynamics Space Nuclear Radiation Gravitational Fields Oscillations	30%
Paper 3	General Paper Experimental Methods	40%

Studying A-level physics

Since September 2015 we have been following the Edexcel physics specification which is designed to inspire you. Year 12 will give you a firm foundation of skills and in the second year you will be set free to explore the 'Wonders of the Universe' as we take a look at the vastness of space and then consider the minute particles that make everything work. The course will develop your fascination and enthusiasm for physics, and will equip you for a range of prestigious courses and careers. The course is content-led allowing lessons to be challenging as well as engaging. Content is laid out clearly in a series of teaching modules, as listed above. At the start of the course there will be an emphasis on communication and calculation skills required to make the transition from GCSE to A-level as smooth as possible. Although practical work will form a considerable part of the course, there is no assessed coursework component.

Entry requirements

Students wishing to take physics should have a grade 6 or above in physics or combined science and a grade 6 in maths. We strongly recommend combining this course with maths.

POLITICS

Syllabus title:
Government and politics

Examination board:
Edexcel

A-level

Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas

Component 2: UK Government and Optional Political Ideas

Component 3: Comparative Politics

Studying A-level government and politics

Government and politics is a well-respected A-level course because it offers a sound intellectual base for those wanting to study the arts, humanities or social sciences at university. Furthermore the skills covered, such as analysis and communication, are attractive to employers. On a broader level the subject encourages students to be aware of their role in society and their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

In Year 12 the course focuses on British politics. Students will study how the UK is governed and in particular will focus on the role of key institutions such as parliament and key roles such as the prime minister. This will obviously necessitate an approach whereby the students will have to apply theory to actual experience. Therefore we will study recent political history particularly focusing

on politics since the 1970s. Students will also study politics from the bottom up, looking at the role of ordinary people in the political process. In Year 13 the course will focus on the development of political ideas and how these ideas have affected modern politics.

Entry requirements

Many students will not have studied politics before. However, it is clearly desirable that you have an interest in politics and current affairs. If you are the sort of person who enjoys keeping up with topical issues then this might be the course for you. The course is open to all students who achieve a grade 6 or higher in English or any other relevant humanity subject.

PRODUCT DESIGN

Syllabus title:

Design and Technology: Product Design

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Written paper	2.5 hrs	30% of A-level
Paper 2	Written paper	1.5 hrs	20% of A-level
Non examined assessment (NEA)		45 hrs	50% of A-level

Studying A-level product design

The world we live in is becoming steadily more complex and technologically advanced. Users increasingly demand that everyday products be attractive and easy to use. The role of the product designer is gaining increasing importance as innovation and new technologies become more significant in the design process.

A-level product design looks at the transformation of ideas into successful products matched to the needs of the user and the market place. You will analyse a range of commercial products during the course and comment on their aesthetics, functionality, ease of use and how well they perform their intended role. Product design at Balcarras closely follows the work undertaken in product design courses at university.

The coursework component will give you the opportunity to use your creativity and imagination to design and manufacture solutions to problems that you have identified, problems that have not already been solved countless times by others. It is important to emphasise that you will not only be judged by the finished results but also by how you respond to the design process. In a creative process you will be expected to experiment with different constructions, materials, components and production methods in new combinations. Above all, there is an emphasis on innovation and new thinking. Eventually, you will produce functioning and aesthetically attractive solutions, based upon how people use, and interact with, the product.

In addition to developing your designing and making skills, you will begin to consider the role and responsibilities of the professional product designer. This will involve developing an understanding of customer needs, concept generation and design for manufacture, both at an industrial level and within the school workshop. During the course you will consider contemporary and developing technologies and materials, and how they impact on the products we use everyday. The professional product designer works closely with industry and with the market and must be well acquainted with industrial working methods, the course is therefore multi-disciplinary - both artistic and technical in character.

The computer is a powerful and essential tool for the product designer. During the course, you will be introduced to specialist equipment, including sublimation printers, a laser cutter and rapid prototyping machines. You will be expected to submit your coursework in the form of an electronic portfolio (e-portfolio).

Entry requirements

Students should, ideally, have achieved a grade 6, or higher, at GCSE level in a technology subject. However grade 5 will be considered on an individual basis.

PSYCHOLOGY

Syllabus title:

Psychology

Examination board:

AQA

Studying A-level psychology

Psychology is defined as "the science of mind and behaviour". When you begin to study this subject, you will be able to understand the reasons why people behave in the way that they do, and evaluate different theoretical perspectives in order to explain the behaviour.

The topics you will study are broad; the course ranges from social influence and biopsychology in Year 12 to forensic psychology, gender and schizophrenia in Year 13.

During the course you will be expected to make presentations, debate from a particular perspective, scrutinise data and write both short and extended responses to questions.

Psychology can lead to careers in areas including social work, occupational psychology, teaching, marketing, personnel, nursing and clinical psychology.

Entry requirements

Successful A-level psychology students need to have excellent written communication skills and be confident using numbers.

A-level

Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Influence • Memory • Attachment • Psychopathology 	2 hr written exam	96 marks	33.3% of A-level	Four compulsory sections all requiring written answers
Paper 2: Psychology in Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches in Psychology • Biopsychology • Research Methods 	2 hr written exam	96 marks	33.3% of A-level	Three compulsory sections all requiring written answers
Paper 3: Issues and Options in Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues and Debates in Psychology • One from: Relationships; Gender; Cognition and Development • One from: Schizophrenia; Eating Behaviour; Stress • One from: Aggression; Forensic Psychology; Addiction 	2 hr written exam	96 marks	33.3% of A-level	One compulsory section. Three sections each offering a choice of three topics. Students answer one question from each section



RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS

Syllabus title:
Religious Studies

Examination board:
OCR 100% Essay exam

A-level

Paper 1: Philosophy	33% of grade
Paper 2: Ethics	33% of grade
Paper 3: Theology	33% of grade

Studying A-level religion, philosophy and ethics

Religious studies at A-level is a philosophy, ethics and theology course which allows you to ask some of the big questions in life. Is there a God? How did the universe come about? What is right and wrong? Why does pain and suffering exist? Do miracles really happen?

During this challenging course, you will develop your knowledge and understanding of a variety of philosophical arguments, ethical theories and religious ideas as well considering your own interpretations. The course covers the work of the great philosophers such as Plato, Kant, Aquinas and Descartes to more modern philosophical works. You will also be covering ethical theories and applied ethics, covering such topics as euthanasia and business ethics. As well as this you will also extend your understanding of the Christianity through the theology aspects of the course, considering its influence and history as well as the place that it has in today's world. You will develop research and analytical skills, as well as logical thinking skills and the use of reasoned argument. You need to be prepared to

question, think, criticise, analyse and take on board a wide range of ideas and opinions.

Philosophy, ethics and theology combines well with almost all other humanities subjects such as history and geography, but it is important to note that it is also an excellent choice with science and maths based subjects. Indeed, in many universities, you will find that philosophy is an option on science degree courses. This subject is highly regarded by universities due to the rigour and academic nature of the content and the essay writing skills you will be required to obtain.

Entry requirements

Successful A-level philosophy, ethics and theology students need to have strong communication skills and essay writing ability. Assessment will be through written responses in the form of essays, so a love of writing analytical and considered approaches is a must. There are no prior knowledge requirements for this A-level subject.

RUSSIAN

Syllabus title:
Russian

Examination board:
Edexcel

A-level

Paper 1	Listening, Reading and Translation	40% of A-level
Paper 2	Written Response to Works and Translation	30% of A-level
Paper 3	Speaking	30% of A-level

Studying A-level Russian

A-level Russian builds on the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking which you have developed during your GCSE course. It will extend your knowledge of Russian culture and history as you study a range of topics including 'traditions and festivals', 'political and artistic culture in the Russian-speaking world' and 'the final years of the USSR'. The A-level course also involves the study of a literary text and film as you develop your exposure to authentic materials.

We use a range of up-to-date sources such as on-line articles, newspapers and video clips, to understand the current situation in the Russian-speaking world. You will be encouraged to make use of such resources independently to develop your comprehension skills and vocabulary. You will also have the opportunity to participate in theatre visits and other cultural activities relating to the course.

Throughout the A-level course you will also develop your understanding of grammatical concepts as you learn how the language works in order to produce

КТО ПОЛУЧАЕТ ВЫСШЕЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ В РОССИИ?

А В советское время высшее образование в России стало массовым. После 1917 года оно стало доступным для всех социальных групп. Однако к концу 1980-х годов высшее образование было только у 25-30% населения. С 1989 по 2014 годы этот процент вырос более чем в два раза.

Б Сегодня у 54% граждан в возрасте от 25 до 64 лет есть диплом о высшем образовании. Но не во всех регионах ситуация одинаковая, высшее образование доступно не везде.

В В дополнение в стране увеличилось количество вузов: в 1991 году их было 514, в 2015 — уже 896.

Г Бюджетных мест в ВУЗах, когда не надо платить за высшее образование, мало. А плата за высшее образование увеличивается, и зависит от престижа ВУЗа. Также, надо помнить, что Россия огромная страна, переезд из одного региона в другой стоит очень дорого для студента.

1. Сколько россиян имеют высшее образование в наши дни?
2. Надо платить за высшее образование в России?
3. Какие изменения были после революции?
4. В России есть много ВУЗов?

accurate written and spoken Russian. You will learn how to use Russian in everyday situations as well as in formal discussion and debate. Weekly one-to-one conversation classes with a native speaker form an integral part of the course and enable you to develop confidence with both speaking and listening.

The course will interest students who are curious about life in Russia and want to equip themselves with language and communication skills that are increasingly important in the global market. This course can lead onto the study of Russian or another language at university. The A-level Russian course will also give you the opportunity to learn and apply important transferable skills in critical thinking and analysis, which are highly valued by both universities and future employers.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved at least grade 6 at GCSE level in Russian.

SPANISH

Syllabus title:

Spanish

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Listening, Reading & Writing	50% of A-level
Paper 2	Writing	20% of A-level
Paper 3	Speaking	30% of A-level

Studying A-level Spanish

A-level Spanish builds upon the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking that you developed during your GCSE course. You will not only extend your knowledge and understanding of Spain and Spanish life and culture, but also of other Spanish speaking countries around the world. In addition, a good grasp of grammatical concepts will become increasingly important as you learn how the language works in order to produce accurate written and spoken Spanish.

We use a range of up-to-date sources such as the internet, radio, television and magazines, as well as conventional textbooks. Students will also be encouraged to make use of such resources independently. You will learn how to use Spanish in everyday conversation as well as in formal discussion and debate. A Spanish assistant is employed so that students can have one-to-one speaking sessions for half an hour per week. These sessions are obligatory and form an important part of the course.

You will gain a clearer insight into how language works and you will have the opportunity to visit Spain and to take part in other cultural activities. The course will interest students who are curious about life in other countries and want to equip themselves with the language skills that are essential in the international business environment and also highly valued by academic institutions.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved at least a grade 6 at GCSE level in Spanish.



TEXTILES

Syllabus title:

Art and Design (Textile design)

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Unit 1	Personal Investigation	No time limit	96 marks	60% of A-level
Unit 2	Externally Set Assignment	Supervised 15 hrs	96 marks	40% of A-level

Studying A-level textiles

Textiles is an ever-evolving art form that is proving popular in the creative world as a credible medium of expression. A-level Textiles is a specialist subject with access to an excellent range of equipment, facilities, and resources. This multi-disciplinary course is an excellent opportunity for students to explore and develop their creative practise, combining all aspects of their art and design experiences.

You will explore the use of traditional and innovative materials, techniques, and processes to communicate and demonstrate your ideas through the use of a sketchbook. You will be pushed to be curious, experimental and to research a wide range of textile artists and designers to help you develop your own work which can take many forms, including a fine art piece (canvas, sculpture, installation), an innovative item of fashion/costume or interiors piece.

Year 12

Students will experience a wide range of textile workshops to gain the relevant skills needed for the course. These include a selection of traditional and contemporary

processes including fabric manipulation, numerous print and dye techniques, using patterns, hand and machine stitching, weaving, and other constructed textile processes.

Year 13

Students will develop their practise by directing their own work. A personal investigation using an in-depth study of a specific chosen theme or area of textiles will lead to a final piece. This component will include a written piece consisting of 1000-3000 words. The final element of this course is to respond to an exam board question where there are 10 weeks to prepare and then a 15-hour final outcome produced in exam conditions.

Entry requirements

At GCSE level a 6 or higher, in art, textiles or appropriate technology subject. Alternatively individuals may be considered on production of a portfolio demonstrating their skills and interests in the subject.

EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

Syllabus title:
Extended Project

Examination board:
AQA

Completing the extended project qualification

The Extended Project is a Level 3 qualification and is intended to stretch and challenge students beyond their A-level choices; it is therefore highly regarded by universities and employers alike. The EPQ allows each student to embark on a self-motivated and largely independent project. The students have freedom of choice over their project's title, subject to approval by the course coordinators, and the direction of its completion; our students find this highly rewarding.

The project topic is chosen entirely by the student and can take the form of an extended research based 5000 word report or an artefact with a research based 1000 word report. The artefact could encompass; planning and teaching a lesson, a performance, a sculpture or many other formats. All students at Balcarras Sixth Form begin their EPQ journey at the start of year 12 and most will have completed the qualification by the first half term of year 13. AQA encourages students' curiosity and creativity, and each year we are impressed by the huge range of inspiring and interesting ideas that the students come up with. Further to this, the freedom of the course enables students to develop their time management and organisational skills whilst the taught element provides students with vital skills such as referencing and source reviewing which prepares them for academic writing at university level.

Through the delivery of taught elements and through supervisor meetings teachers impart to students the key management and planning skills necessary for the completion of the project, and supervise and monitor students' progress. The EPQ involves extended autonomous work by the student. A supervisor will be assigned to each student and regular meetings will take place to advise and guide them through the process.

The EPQ is an extremely valuable course, preparing students for the challenge and rigour of university study or working life. In addition, an increasing number of universities are including the EPQ in their offers to students. Consequently some students have secured their preferred university through achieving an A in EPQ.

Students are required, with appropriate supervision, to:

- choose an area of interest
- draft a title and aims of the project for formal approval by the centre
- plan, research and carry out the project
- deliver a presentation to a non-specialist audience
- provide evidence of all stages of project development and production for assessment in the form of a log.

The Extended Project will develop and extend from one or more of the student's study areas and/or from an area of personal interest or activity outside their main programme of study.

Entry requirements

All year 12 students follow this course and have a timetabled lesson each week.

HOW TO APPLY

Making your choices

You must choose FOUR courses for which you wish to apply. Please read page 6 for guidance on combining courses.

Do not worry if you are unsure about your choices – you are not necessarily making a firm commitment at this stage.

However, your choice does have two important influences on our planning. First, choosing a course makes it more likely to run. Decisions on the viability of courses will be confirmed in March – April during our post-application consultation interviews with students. Secondly, we will try to make sure that your chosen combination of courses is possible i.e. that they are not timetabled at the same time. This will be more difficult to ensure if you change your mind later on.

Application Form

Please complete the Microsoft form on our website by clicking [here](#). You will receive an acknowledgement by return.

In your Spring post-application consultation meeting we will discuss whether your option choices are consistent with your career and academic ambitions and advise you about your current level of progress and attainment in your GCSE courses, so as to best ensure that you are on track to be a successful applicant. For students based at other schools, we will contact your current school for a reference. Formal conditional offers will follow these consultations for all applicants.

If you are having any difficulties completing our Microsoft Form then please email or call our Sixth form Administrator, Mrs Cheryl Crowley (CC@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk / 01242 545118).

Deadline

Applications should be submitted by 4th February 2024. You may submit your application earlier, but we do recommend doing so after attending our Open Evening in January.

Offers of places

Where an offer of a place in Balcarras Sixth Form is made, the conditions are most likely to be on the basis of attaining the GCSE grades required to study chosen courses at A-level. Places will not be confirmed until after the publication of GCSE results in August.

Late applicants

Late applications may be considered. Please do contact us. However, there are likely to be only a limited number of places, so please be aware that late applicants cannot be guaranteed a place.





Lola Williams (Year 11 Balcarras School)

Post-18 Plans - To study Product Design at university

Choosing Balcarras was an easy decision for me as I enjoyed lower school and always found the schools atmosphere friendly. Balcarras offered all the subjects I wanted to take, with amazing facilities. The Product Design department is particularly brilliant. The department has so many 3D printers and other types of workshop machinery you can make pretty much anything! Furthermore, the dedication of the teaching staff is phenomenal, and this has been a key element in my personal successes, from winning the national Techgirl competition and receiving an award at Abbey Road Studios, to developing my eco-themed EPQ artefact.

I study Product Design, Maths and Physics and studied Art in Year 12. I was nervous about taking Maths and Physics as I thought they would be difficult, but all my teachers are always approachable and have been keen to help when I have been struggling, so I should never have worried!

There are also varied extra-curricular to participate in. I took part in STEM ambassadors programme, and the maths buddying scheme, as well as being encouraged and supported to pursue additional academic competitions like Techgirl. Outside STEM, I always take part in the school's annual production, playing in the orchestra, which is a fun outlet and 'escape' from the pressures of study and lessons, and you get front row seats to the play every night!



Nisa Aslan (Year 11 - Pittville School)

Post-18 Plans: To study Law at university

Whilst I was researching which Sixth Form to attend, Balcarras stood out to me the most due to its outstanding facilities and welcoming environment. Having joined Balcarras from an another school, I had been a bit apprehensive and concerned that the process of meeting new teachers and students would be difficult. I am delighted that it was quite the opposite, and now being a firm part of the Balcarras student community, I am not surprised. From the first day, everyone was so welcoming, and even after the first week it had felt as if I had been a part of the Balcarras community for many years.

There is a very high standard of teaching here which has allowed me to progress academically in a way that has positively challenged me at times, but ultimately has allowed me to have a deeper understanding of each of the subjects I have studied. What I have found even more valuable is the pastoral support I have received here. It has been great with support being available from my Head of Year, tutor, the broader pastoral team, or any member of staff, at any time I have needed it.

I have had the opportunity to take part in the Boost programme which has allowed me to prepare for university, participating in trips to Oxford University and evening dinners with my peers and teachers. I have also participated in the Debate competition which was invaluable as debating and public speaking was something that I was not confident in, but having opportunities like these has allowed me to gain confidence.

After Sixth Form, I am planning to study Law at university, as it is an area which I am deeply passionate about.



Matthew Chestney (Year 11 - Balcarras School)

Post-18 Plans: To study Music at university

I chose Balcarras Sixth Form because of their absolutely wonderful music department, and having established myself in the school from my previous years of study here, it was an easy and obvious decision to choose to study my A-levels here. The best part about the music department is its sense of community, as the staff are all very caring and approachable, regardless of whatever question you may have, be it related to your academic studies, or something more general and of a pastoral nature. The facilities are also second-to-none, with a bespoke study facility for the Sixth Form music students, that allows the students to have access to the music resources in a quiet space, not to mention the practical practice rooms that are also accessible to us.

I have found that the constant availability of broader pastoral and post-18 support in the Sixth Form to be a vital part of my experience throughout my time in Year 12 and Year 13, as there is so much work and experiences that are brand new to you when you start. This support helps guide you through the two years as smoothly as possible and with as few 'bruising' and avoidable experiences as possible.

There is a huge leap in workload going into Year 12 and especially Year 13, but all the staff are aware of this, and are incredibly approachable and understanding if you have any issue. I can be assured that I will have the support I need if ever it is needed. At the same time, the additional 'privileges' you get as a Sixth Form student are very helpful and give you a further sense of independence that you would not necessarily experience in the lower years. It feels like a stepping stone before university, where your education is put in your own hands.



Andrew Sousa (Year 11 - American School of Doha, Qatar)

Post-18 Plans: To study Computer Science at university

When I decided to come to England from Qatar to pursue my academic studies, my family and I conducted research on the best Sixth Forms in the Southwest region. This is when I discovered Balcarras Sixth Form. Not only did it yield fantastic academic results year after year, but it also offered a welcoming and prosperous community. Coming from a foreign country I thought it was important to find a place where I would feel accepted and feel welcomed socially, but also would allow me to thrive academically. I truly believe that Balcarras has been successful in both areas.

One of the best parts of going to Balcarras is that I was able to take four subjects in Year 12, and this allowed me to explore courses that I had an interest in with great depth, such as Computer Science which hadn't been available in my previous school. I also valued the opportunity to study and pursue an A-level in Portuguese as an extra course, partly so that I could stay tuned with my Brazilian roots, but also to secure an additional qualification. This too was not an option that I previously had.

The teachers at the school have all been extremely helpful and have aided me in my growth. The manner of their teaching is also done in such a way that keeps the lessons interesting and interactive, and their doors are always open - so as and when I have ever needed any clarification or additional guidance, it has always been easy to access.

My post-18 plans are to study Computer Science at university, which I can honestly say that it is thanks to the opportunity to do so at Balcarras.

Balcarras Sixth Form

2024



For more information contact:

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