

Balcarras Sixth Form

2025





Beatrice Floyd (Year 11 Stowe School)

Plans: to study human, social and political sciences at Cambridge University

After my tour of Balcarras, I knew it was the right choice for Sixth Form for me, getting a warm feeling from not only the students, but also the teachers. Coming from such a different school meant it was a huge transition, but the Sixth Form team made it really easy for me to settle in, organising whole school BBQs, ice breaker activities and team building afternoons to help all the new students joining the school. Being able to feel comfortable with people in my classes meant focusing on schoolwork was far easier. On top of that, the smaller class sizes we have in the Sixth Form allowed for more discussion-based teaching that encouraged us to think for ourselves. It also meant I enjoyed better quality feedback from teachers, who are always happy to take the time to go through your essays with you.

Though the feedback I received has exponentially improved my performance, the thing that made the most difference to my exam grades was my teachers immediately flagging my dyslexia. This secured me extra times in exams, making a huge difference to my confidence and quality of writing. Taking all essay-based subjects hasn't been easy, but the support teachers provide (such as revision sessions, coursework tutorials) as well as extra curriculums (like the school election and external talks) has made the content digestible and engaging.

I now hope to go onto study HSPS at Cambridge, something that I don't think I would have had the skills or drive to apply for without the help of my teachers and heads of year.



Charlie Houlston (Year 11 Balcarras)

Plans: to study geography and economics at university

I have been at Balcarras since Year 7 and knew that I wanted to stay for Sixth Form. I knew really quickly that it was where I wanted to study maths, geography and economics, and be my platform to go onto university to study geography and economics. I have always been supported at Balcarras in everything I do. Whether that was going to talk to teachers during study periods to ask questions about homework, or talking with the Sixth Form team for help about university applications. There is always someone that is willing to help and who is genuinely wanting to help you do the best that you can do. This level of support has meant that I have been able to do the best I could at A-level.

Another really important part of Balcarras is the extra-curricular enrichment that is offered. I recommend getting involved in just about anything. There's something for anybody whether that is music, drama or debating. For me it was rugby and Young Enterprise. I captained the rugby team in Year 13 and being able to go on a Wednesday afternoon and play matches has really helped me to enjoy what can be a stressful year. Being able to go and do something I love every week and have that encouraged and supported by school has been really important. Another example of this was the mixed gender touch rugby tournament we participated in last year which came about from the Sixth Form team supporting 'student voice' initiatives. The school made sure we had training, coaches kit and so on, and we were able to enjoy the day. Being supported constantly in school, academically and in personal development, and just making sure we were having fun and enjoying school is what has made Balcarras really special for me the last seven years.



Mimi Brotherton (Year 11 Balcarras)

Plans: to study chemistry at university

I chose Balcarras Sixth Form because I loved my time so much at Balcarras during my lower school years; put simply, I just didn't want to leave! Balcarras has always provided me with an outstanding education and plenty of opportunities. The school has a great sense of community and it welcomes all who join really warmly - whether they are students continuing at Balcarras or those who are new to the school. The Sixth Form is full of motivated students, and this sense of purpose really helps all progress academically. There is a good atmosphere socially within the Sixth Form and all of the teachers are incredibly supportive and friendly; I think it is this environment and culture that allows the students of Balcarras Sixth Form to be so successful.

Balcarras is unique as you are allowed to study four subjects in Year 12 and then you can select which three to study in Year 13. In Year 12 I chose to study chemistry, maths, business studies and economics.

The teachers will always make time for you and their dedication towards their subject is excellent. Revision sessions are regularly offered, which has been super helpful for problems with homework or for re-explaining content.

I have enjoyed all of my subjects but I have decided to pursue a degree in chemistry at university. I have no doubt that through the support of my subject teachers and the Sixth Form team, I will have the opportunity to be successful in my A-levels this year!



Nigel Boateng (Year 11 Cirencester Deer Park)

Plans: to study maths at university

Since my secondary school does not have a Sixth Form, I wanted to go to a Sixth Form that would stretch my knowledge and have an exciting, welcoming atmosphere. Balcarras has ticked all these boxes, giving me the freedom to study four A-levels in Year 12 and the choice to drop down to three in Year 13, an option not available at most Sixth Forms. Since I enjoy my subjects so much, I decided to keep them all in Year 13. Despite the fact that studying four A-Levels is often challenging, my teachers are consistently supportive and are always great people to ask for advice. There is also the option to complete an EPQ, which I currently do, and that has helped me develop independent study skills that I can use for university, and really enhanced my research skills and referencing. Since I aspire to go to university to study maths, I appreciate the support and opportunities that Balcarras has offered that has helped me towards my goal.

I have really enjoyed the wealth of extra-curricular activities offered to me, as it gave me the chance to meet and make friends with other people that did not share any lessons with me. In Year 12, we are given the opportunity to choose an enrichment activity outside of the curriculum. I ended up doing ultimate frisbee, and quickly went from not even knowing how to play the sport to absolutely loving it. Events like House Music and the Variety Show have also allowed me to express my passion for playing the piano, even though I do not take music A-level. I was even fortunate to take part in the DofE Gold Award, which has perhaps been my favourite experience from Balcarras.



Welcome to Balcarras Sixth Form

A warm welcome to this guide about the courses available in the Sixth Form from September 2025.

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.

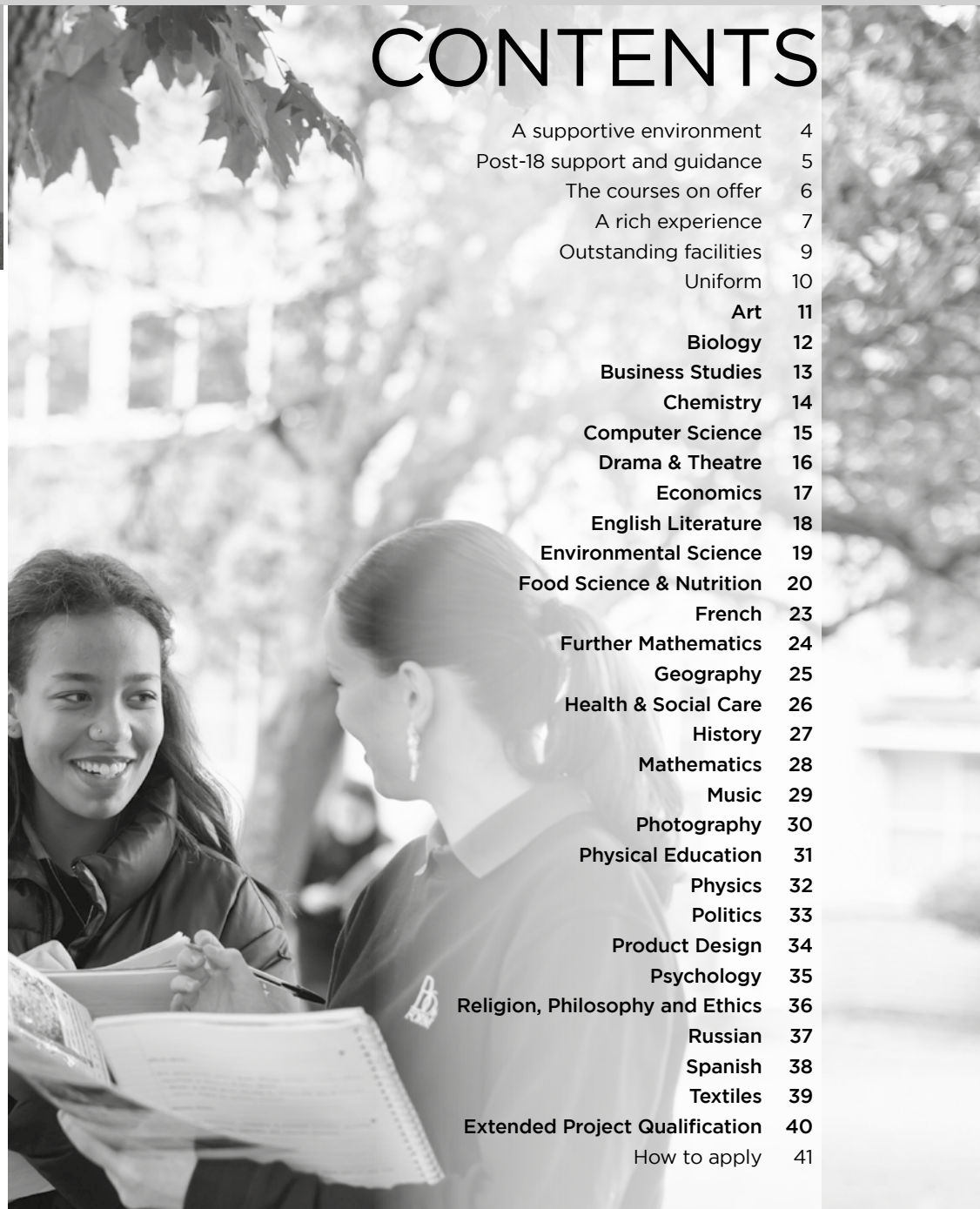
Darren Leatherbarrow Head of Sixth Form

Teachers are experts in their subjects.

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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 guide and facilitate 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 Lewis, alongside our lead Careers Administrator, Mrs Towers, coordinates 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.

We encourage all our students to investigate both UCAS and apprenticeship opportunities, both can be pursued as post-18 pathways at the same time.

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.

Further to this, additional academic intervention and support evenings, along with higher education preparation evenings, are also offered throughout the academic year.

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.

Food Science & Nutrition Health and Social Care

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. A number of courses include NEA's (Non Examined Assessments) as part of your programme of study, internal deadlines for NEAs are published throughout the year. 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 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 (language or literature). Please refer to the Balcarras website for full details, including our over subscription criteria.

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. We have the capacity to enrol a minimum of 50 external applicants.

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, cinema club and table-top gaming.

Sporting activities

In addition to the Year 12 weekly games, Sixth Form students are welcome to partake in extracurricular competitive sports including rugby, netball, football and hockey. These training sessions and fixtures will fall outside of your timetable.

Extracurricular activities

Students participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities including: The Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award, Young Enterprise, careers-related industry visits, the paired reading scheme, 'Engage' discussion forums, The Law Society, the maths 'Hawking Society', 'Lessons from Auschwitz' programme, expeditions, debating, school music competitions, drama productions, interschool 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 European city cultural trip, our most recent destination being Berlin.

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. Other events include our annual senior citizen's tea party, where we invite local residents in for afternoon tea, live music and good company. In the spring, we mark the approach of the exam season with our annual Sixth Form 'Dress Up Day' charity event. 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.

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 (YE)

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. Due to the popularity of YE, we often run two teams!

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, and is an excellent student leadership opportunity as well as being a great example of how Balcarras Sixth Form students are superb ambassadors.

Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)

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 a number of 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, the Centre for Professional Development.

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, plus additional laptops students can borrow and hot-desk in certain areas of Sixth Form. 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 or the Sixth Form designated music suites.

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, cooking facilities 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. Sixth Form students are of course welcome to use other food outlets around the school including our brand new street-food van, tuckshops and the canteen.



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

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:

Eduqas

A-level

Paper 1: Business Opportunities & Functions	135 minutes	33.3% of A-level
Paper 2: Business Analysis & Strategy	135 minutes	33.3% of A-level
Paper 3: Business in a changing world	135 minutes	33.3% of A-level

Studying A-level business

This A-level specification introduces learners to the dynamic business environment and the importance of entrepreneurial activity in creating business opportunities and sustaining business growth. Learners will have the opportunity to develop a wide range of essential skills required for higher education and employment. The focus of the specification is to nurture an enthusiasm for studying business using contemporary contexts, allowing learners to develop an appreciation of the strategic, complex and inter-related nature of business issues from a local to global perspective. A-level in business encourages learners to:

- develop an enthusiasm for studying business
- gain an holistic understanding of business in a range of contexts
- develop a critical understanding of organisations
- understand that business behaviour can be studied from a range of perspectives
- generate enterprising and creative approaches to business opportunities and issues
- be aware of the ethical dilemmas and responsibilities faced by organisations
- acquire a range of relevant business and generic skills, including decision-making, problem-solving, the challenging of assumptions and critical analysis
- apply numerical skills in a range of business contexts.

Entry requirements

Students do not need to have studied business at GCSE level but if they have they must have a minimum of a grade 6 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	2¼ 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	2¼ hrs	37% of total A-level
Unit 3	Unified Chemistry	70 marks across all teaching modules 1 to 6	1½ 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	2½ hrs written paper	140 marks	40% of total A-level
Unit 2	Algorithms and Programming	2½ 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

A-level computer science offers an in-depth exploration of the principles and practices that power the digital world. This course covers a range of topics from programming and algorithm design to understanding how hardware and software interact. Students gain practical experience in coding, problem-solving, and system design, while developing critical thinking skills essential for tackling complex challenges.

With a focus on both theoretical knowledge and hands-on projects, A-level computer science prepares students for further study or careers in fields like software engineering, data science, and cybersecurity. This course is ideal for students who are analytical, curious, and excited to shape the future through technology.

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

*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

Are you passionate about the environment and driven to make a positive impact on the world around you? We invite you to join our exciting A-level course in environmental science that will deepen your understanding of our planet's intricate ecosystems and equip you with the knowledge and skills to address the pressing environmental challenges of our time.

Environmental science is a captivating field that delves into the complex interactions between living organisms and their environment. It examines the delicate balance of ecosystems, the impact of human activities on natural resources, and the solutions we can implement to create a sustainable future. Through this course, you will develop a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of our world and the crucial role we play in its preservation.

By studying environmental science at Balcarras, you will not only develop a deep passion for the environment but also gain transferable skills that are highly sought after by universities and employers. Critical thinking, data analysis, problem-solving, and effective communication are just a few of the invaluable skills you will cultivate throughout the course, opening doors to a wide range of career opportunities in environmental consultancy, conservation, sustainability, policymaking, and more.

Topics

From investigating the effects of pollution and climate change to analysing biodiversity and conservation strategies, you will gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in safeguarding our planet's natural resources.

You will attend a 3-day residential in Wales and 1-day trip to the River Chelt where you will engage in fieldwork, laboratory experiments, and data analysis, acquiring essential scientific skills and techniques along the way. You will also visit Gloucestershire Waste incinerator and discover how our rubbish is processed in Cheltenham.

The full list of topics includes:

3.1 The living environment	3.5 Biological resources
3.2 The physical environment	3.6 Sustainability
3.3 Energy resources	3.7 Research methods
3.4 Pollution	

Entry requirements

General entry requirements are GCSE grade 5 in maths and English and grade 5-5 in combined science or grade 5 in biology, chemistry and physics 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 45 minutes 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 food and nutrition. Students will have the opportunity to learn about the relationship between the human body and food as well as developing practical skills for cooking and preparing food. The course

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.



Ben Wright (Year 11 Balcarras)

Plans: to study data science at university

I chose to continue at Balcarras after my five years of lower school because I felt it was the logical next step for my education. I had great experiences from lower school to draw upon that I knew would translate to the Sixth Form, including excellent teaching that was really supportive, a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and most of all a friendly atmosphere. In the Sixth Form, the attributes of the lower school have certainly carried over but have also been built upon. In particular, the excellent teaching and structured approach has led me to feeling fully supported in all of my subjects. Learning from these teachers who are clearly passionate about their subjects has definitely inspired me academically whilst having also led to thoroughly enjoyable lessons. I personally really value the structure of supervised study periods where you can get a head start on homework and revision while also having the opportunity to ask for any support you might need which I have found especially useful when making post 18 decisions. Balcarras Sixth Form have also offered great sporting opportunities like the football and rugby teams which are well organised and play in regular fixtures. They also allocated a weekly games period in Year 12 which I really enjoyed due to the variety of sports and activities available and the friendly and fun environment it created. After the Sixth Form, I plan to study data science or a statistics related course at university, ideally at Warwick or Bath. The school have been extremely supportive in helping me to understand the university application process, make my application and write my personal statement which will all aid me in reaching my post 18 aspirations.

If you want a great balance between academic strength, extra-curricular opportunities and an enjoyable, friendly atmosphere, I would highly recommend Balcarras Sixth Form as an outstanding choice for any post-GCSE students.



Georgie Robinson (Year 11 Balcarras)

Plans: history and politics at university

After attending Balcarras from Year 7, the high standard of teaching along with the friends I had made in the lower school meant that choosing to continue at Sixth Form was an easy decision, and I didn't even consider going somewhere else. Since the start of Year 12, I have really enjoyed my time in Balcarras Sixth Form and have loved taking part in all the opportunities the Sixth Form offers that sets it apart from the lower school. As a politics student, I was very keen to take part in the Sixth Form debate competition, and my partner and I managed to reach the final, although we were narrowly defeated by our opposition in the end. Despite this, taking part in the debates has led me to be a much more confident person, and has made me even more determined to win the competition next year.

I have also had the chance to go on some great trips in Sixth Form and was lucky enough to go on both the ski trip to Norway, which ran an extra week just for Year 12, and a trip to Berlin in the summer. Berlin was particularly fun because we went during the Euros, so were able to witness both the city's rich history and England's progression to the finals at Berlin's official fan zone. The addition of this end-of-year cultural visit is another example of how the Sixth Form team always look to listen to the student body and improve the enrichment opportunities that that are offered.

These experiences, along with the supportive environment created by the Sixth Form team, mean that whilst I have had a great time at Sixth Form, I also feel prepared and well-equipped to go to university.



Robin Torres (Year 11 Holmleigh Park)

Plans: to study psychology at university

During my time in secondary school, I never put much thought towards where I would go after GCSE's but once I discovered Balcarras and realised it was a viable option, I knew it was the right place for me. Having completed my GCSEs in various foster home placements throughout Gloucester, I knew I was looking for a Sixth Form where I could balance the academic challenges of A-levels but also support my own transition into becoming a young adult. Boasting a vibrant community, myriads of extracurricular opportunities and a proactive pastoral team I found Balcarras to have the perfect environment to foster a love for my subjects and develop strong relationships with my newfound peers.

One of the things I have valued most about my experience at Balcarras has been how much enjoyment I have found in studying both within and beyond the curriculum. Studying three STEM subjects- biology, physics and maths - has been very challenging at times but also extremely rewarding. Having had the additional support to enter various competitions such as the Senior Maths challenge, the Homerton Biology Challenge and even an essay writing competition hosted by a Cambridge College, I look back grateful with how much Balcarras has challenged me to think and grow beyond just exam results. The Balcarras pastoral team has also been exceptional in aiding me when navigating university applications. Having many additional challenges associated with being a care experienced student, my teachers have been nothing but outstanding, accommodating and working with my needs both regarding university and beyond. With this support I plan to study psychology with the intentions of becoming a clinical psychologist.

Overall, Balcarras is an amazing Sixth Form for students looking for a rewarding centre to tackle not only A-levels, but the challenges associated with them.



Timothy Cowling (Year 11 Cirencester Deer Park)

Plans: to study music at university

I made my decision to come to Balcarras Sixth Form after I attended the Sixth Form open evening when I was in Year 11. I was immediately impressed by the fact that the headteacher, Mr Burke, in his speech, wasn't afraid to say how proud he was of the quality of teaching, the facilities and most importantly the students of Balcarras. After coming here, I agree. The quality of academic teaching is second to none, the facilities rival private schools and there is every opportunity for every student to succeed to a very high level. As a student new to the school, the student community is one that I felt a part of immediately.

The next thing that drew me to Balcarras was the implemented study time, instead of "frees". Personally, the structure of having dedicated time to get all my homework done in school is fantastic as it enables me to do other activities outside of school and not have to think about homework. As I travel some distance to school, knowing the study facilities are open before and after school too has been very helpful. The Sixth Form team at Balcarras value the work life balance of their students.

Being able to study four subjects in Year 12 really helped me as it kept my options open while I was undecided on what subjects I wanted to study. Ultimately, it helped me to realise what I want to go into in the future, which is invaluable.

However, the main deciding factor, for me, was the music department. The sheer quantity of opportunities available in just one department, combined with the incredible quality and experience of the teachers is amazing.



Martha Gale (Year 11 Balcarras)

Plans: to study philosophy and sociology at university

I have attended Balcarras since Year 7 and as soon as I finished my GCSEs I already knew I wanted to stay here for Sixth Form. I currently take history, philosophy and ethics, and drama as throughout lower school I had loved all those subjects – taking them for A-level has only made me love them even more. I found that the quality of teaching here for all the subjects gives such a depth to each topic and makes learning new skills and techniques manageable. I'm extremely grateful for all the support I have received from the school over the years.

The diverse range of extracurricular activities and opportunities allows everyone to each discover new interests and hobbies, as well as being both enjoyable and engaging. I have always had a long-standing interest in theatre, but since joining Balcarras that interest has only grown. From getting involved in the annual school play – 'City of Angels' this year – to taking leadership roles in both House Music and House Dance, there are numerous extracurricular performing arts opportunities to get immersed in. I particularly enjoyed leading House Music for the lower school in September 2024 with a group of my friends, which we were delighted to win for Selvey House.

Furthermore, when I began thinking about my future in education I felt very lost – university decisions felt extremely confusing and overwhelming at the beginning of the year for me. However, with the unwavering support of all the teachers I have been able to discover what I would like to do for higher education in the next few years. I would love to study philosophy and sociology as a combined honours at Exeter, or Warwick. Thanks to all the staff in the Sixth Form team and the many resources they have provided for researching into different routes for the future, I am now confident that I have a clear path for achieving where I want to go.



Mark Tarnavskyy

(Year 11 Cleeve School, prior to that, Aerospace Lyceum of NAU, Ukraine)

Plans: To study AI with computer science at university

Until recently, I had no idea what to expect from Sixth Form, but I have always wanted more opportunities to explore my strengths and abilities. Many friends, my former host family, and other Ukrainians who had studied here at Balcarras recommended this institution as one of the best places to pursue my ambitions with outstanding support for international students. Balcarras was a clear choice for me.

From the very first weeks at Balcarras, I felt the school's remarkable academic potential. Each teacher is fully dedicated to their work and able to bring fresh perspectives to my subjects. Thus, I deepened my interest in the complexities and applications of physics. Meanwhile, the teachers of further maths, maths and computer science have given me new impetus to work on personal research in my free time.

Balcarras has not only allowed me to enjoy my academic subjects but also to self-develop within a really supportive, large and like-minded community. I am honoured to be part of such groups as Elite School Boys' Choir, String Group, the maths Hawking Society and Boost Programme. Additionally, I initiated the formation of the school chess club and organised several inter-student chess tournaments. This proves how rich the school is in extracurricular activities and how much support exists within the Sixth Form community for new initiatives.

Having experienced the war, and some gruesome realities of the modern world, I became determined to address these challenges, convinced that the key lies in advancing and harnessing AI. Therefore, Balcarras became my essential stepping stone before entering university to study AI with computer science, hoping to make a progressive contribution to our society's path toward future resilience and sustainability.



Robyn Millington (Year 11 Balcarras)

Plans: to study geography at university

Continuing the next step in my academic journey here at Balcarras was an easy choice for me, as it was evident through my studies from Year 7 to 11, that everything I needed to succeed was already here.

Both in the lower school and the Sixth Form, I have been supported greatly by the incredible facilities. These range from independent study rooms to sports and creative spaces, nurturing my academic study while also helping me sustain my extracurricular passions, such as expedition or the school production. I have been able to explore my interests across all subjects and even collaborate with fellow students on projects within the Sixth Form, such as debate competitions and the business team, Young Enterprise.

The Sixth Form team also puts a huge amount of time and effort into guiding students through their post 18 application process, offering additional activities such as Boost, the Buddy Scheme and Stem Ambassador to diversify applications and offer the chance to develop valuable skills. This balance between academic challenges and creative freedom truly enriched my experience at Balcarras, ensuring that every student is able to thrive both academically and personally. It is the teaching and community that really sets this Sixth Form apart, however with the supportive environment and dedicated staff enhancing the learning experience massively. It is clear that the school is moulded with the students' passions and goals at its centre, and this is undoubtedly the reason for the strength of community that you feel here.

There is such a wealth of opportunity available at Balcarras, and I cannot imagine that anywhere else could have given me the extent of support or challenged me as this Sixth Form has. I am very thankful to have been a part of such a community and will look back on my experiences fondly, as I begin to navigate my gap year and studies at university.



Sean Omoruyi (Year 11 Pittville)

Plans: to study medicine at university

As a student who had studied at a different school before Sixth Form, I was initially drawn to Balcarras as it is a school where I was confident that the standard of teaching and learning is one that allows students to achieve the best possible academic outcomes and grades that they can get. This opinion was absolutely confirmed when I attended open evening and was able to view the amazing facilities along with the friendly atmosphere and sense of community created by all the students and staff that I talked to.

In Year 12, I was able to participate in numerous extra-curricular activities, including Boost and the STEM Ambassadors programme, and these experiences have taught me so much about a variety of divergent and interesting topics which have not only been useful and enjoyable, helping me to take a break from traditional schoolwork, whilst also enhancing my experiences and elevating my personal statement for my university application. Being able to study four A-levels at this school has proven to be really rewarding for me, as I have been able to master four subjects that I had previously only briefly looked at during GCSE. During challenging times, I have always been able to count on my teachers, who consistently make a genuine effort to help me and other students when we don't fully understand certain areas of a subject. This assistance has helped me to accomplish more in my subjects and was the catalyst for most of my success today.

After Year 13, I plan on studying medicine at university so I can study science in greater detail, and I can make a positive difference to patients that I see during the career I aspire to. I am really grateful for all the help that Balcarras has given me to get to this point.

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	1½ hrs	25% of A-level
Paper 2	Core Pure Mathematics 2	1½ hrs	25% of A-level
Paper 3	Further Statistics	1½ hrs	25% of A-level
Paper 4	Further Mechanics	1½ 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 Advanced National Qualification in Health and Social Care
(equivalent to one A-level 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. This course would be well suited who are self-motivated and enjoy working independently as the qualification is 60% NEA and 40% external examination.

By the end of the two-year course learners will have completed a total of six units including two externally assessed exams and four NEA units. This work will cover a variety of topic areas, two optional units plus the four compulsory units listed below:

- Principles of health and social care
- Person-centred approach to care
- Anatomy and physiology for health and social care
- Supporting people with mental health conditions

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.

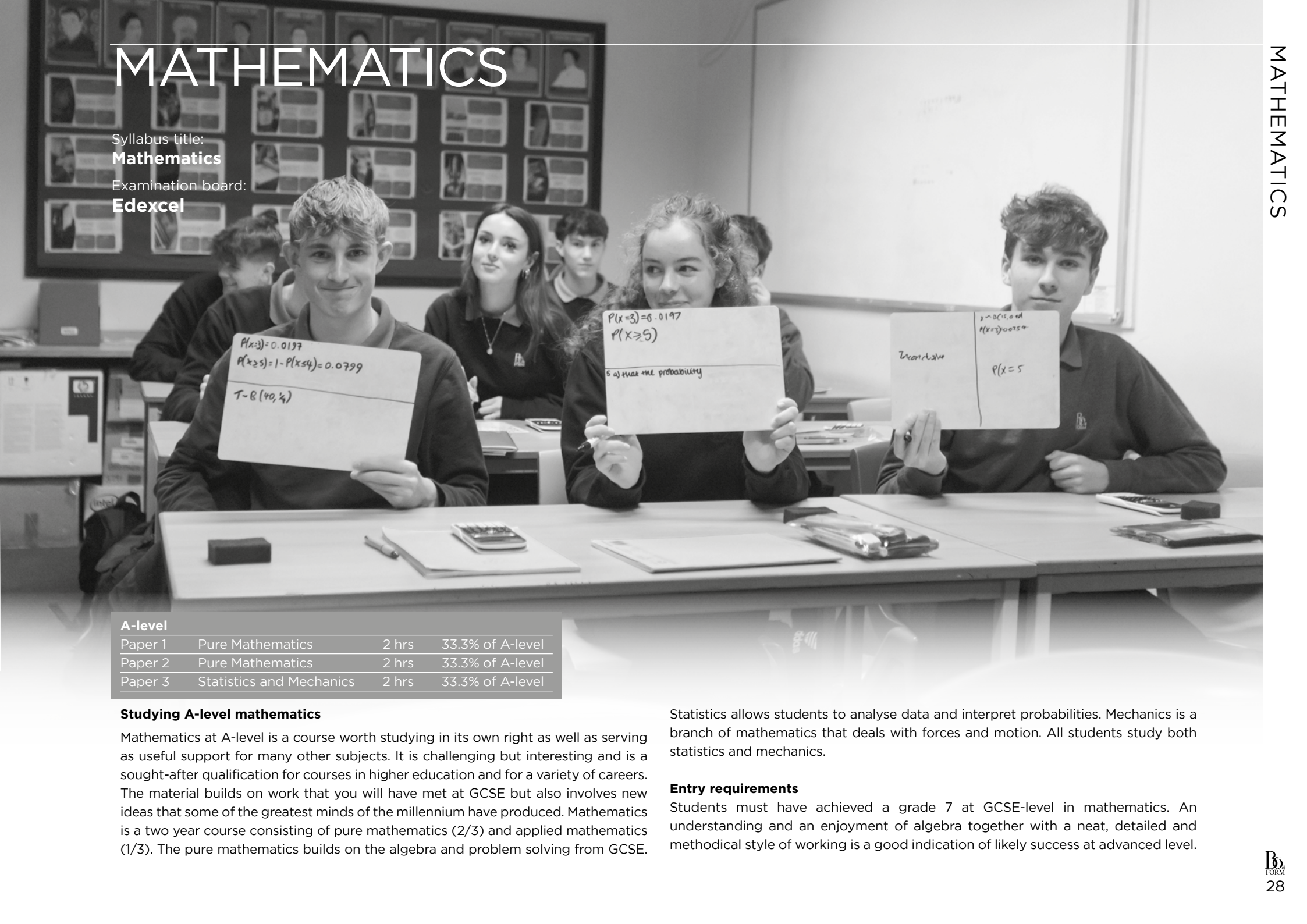
Entry requirements

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


$$P(X=3) = 0.0197$$
$$P(X \geq 5) = 1 - P(X \leq 4) = 0.0799$$
$$T \sim B(40, \frac{1}{4})$$

$$P(X=3) = 0.0197$$
$$P(X \geq 5)$$

5 a) what the probability

$$y \sim N(15, 0.04)$$
$$P(X=5)$$

incomplete

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 challenging 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 by 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

A-level

Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Influence • Memory • Attachment • Clinical psychology and mental health 	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

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.

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 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.

When do we use Genitive

- To denote **possession** (to replace English "of " or
Member **of** the club – Член **клуба**
Mum's book..... – Книга **мамы**.....

- After the **prepositions**:

-ИЗ- *from* -ОТ- *from* Он came from **бан**
-(НЕ)ДАЛЕКО ОТ- *near* -БЛИЗКО ОТ- *near* Он пришел из **бан**
-ДО- *for from* -У- *by*
-ОКОЛО- *near* -ВОКРУГ-
- ДЛЯ- - БЕЗ-
-НАПРОТИВ- *opposite* после- *after* - кроме- *with*

- After **negative** -НЕТ- , -НЕ БЫЛО- , -НЕ БУДЕТ
I don't have a book - У меня **нет** книги

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.

Students will explore the use of traditional and innovative materials, techniques, and processes to communicate and demonstrate their ideas through the use of a sketchbook. They will be pushed to be curious, experimental and to research a wide range of textile artists and designers to help them develop their 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 centred around 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 the course is to respond to an exam board question where there are 10 weeks to prepare and then a 15-hour exam in which to produce a final response.

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 online application form on the Sixth Form admissions page of our website. 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 online 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 5th February 2025. You may submit your application earlier, but please note the form will not be live until after the open evening. All applications submitted prior to the deadline will be treated equally by Balcarras.

Offers of places

Where an offer of a place in Balcarras Sixth Form is made, the conditions will be on the basis of attaining the GCSE grades required to study your chosen courses at A-level.

Balcarras students continuing their education in the Sixth Form here, will have their places confirmed following the publication of GCSE results in August 2025.

Applicants from external centres are invited to submit GCSE results and confirmation of their desire to accept their conditional offer. Final places will be confirmed as soon as possible.

Further Information about the admission process will be shared at Sixth Form Open Evening, Sixth Form Taster Day and will be available on the school website.

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.





Arianwen Williams (Year 11 Winchcombe)

Plans: to study environmental science at university.

When looking for a Sixth Form I was drawn to Balcarras, because of it's reputation for academic excellence. Balcarras also gave me the opportunity to study environmental science as an A-level, which isn't common in Sixth Forms in the area and is something I am keen to study further. At the open evening, the fantastic music facilities and opportunities within the music department stood out and, as I knew I wanted to attend a Sixth Form that offered a wide range of musical extra-curricular opportunities, Balcarras became the obvious choice for me. As Winchcombe School does not have a Sixth Form, moving to a new school in Year 12 was always going to be a natural progression. What I didn't expect was how easy and smooth this transition would be. Balcarras Sixth Form staff have developed a super programme of events designed especially to help students who are new to the school to form bonds with the staff and other students, helping us to settle quickly and feel welcomed into the Balcarras community.

The extra-curricular activities offered at Balcarras is vast. I love the variety of extra-curricular musical opportunities Balcarras has available and, as an external student, joining Chamber Choir, Soul Band and Balcajazz helped me to develop new friendships and fully integrate into the Sixth Form. Through these, I have been fortunate to take part in the Carol Concert and Midsummer Music. I have also led House Music which gave me the opportunity to work with and mentor students across the school. I performed in the School Production, an amazing experience which I would highly recommend and a highlight of the school calendar each year. Going forward, I would like to study an environmental science degree at university, a passion which has developed through my time studying it at A-level. I have loved my time in Balcarras Sixth Form, and I cannot think of a better place to have completed my further education.



Cadhla Leatherbarrow (Year 11 Balcarras)

Plans: to study English and journalism at university

There were so many reasons for choosing to apply to Balcarras Sixth Form. From an academic perspective, Balcarras offered the opportunity to study four courses in Year 12 which was incredibly useful in keeping future options open. I know I am far from alone in being a student who has changed their minds about post-18 pathways, and ended up dropping a course which had originally been vital to my original university and career ambitions. Furthermore, the quality of teaching and learning in all my chosen subjects - English, drama and product design - is really exceptional. From a pastoral point of view, I knew from the experiences of older friends and my older sister just how supportive the Sixth Form team were, and was very confident that I would find empathy, support and guidance should I need it at any stage. From a social angle, the Sixth Form community is just so vibrant! I know I have made some new friends who will be friends for life!

From an extra-curricular and enrichment standpoint there is almost too much one could do. I have been able to participate in a multitude of things - a Sixth Form leader in House Music, playing a supporting character in the school's production of 'The 39 Steps', being a peer mentor for Year 7 Personal Development with the Boost initiative, and being a Balcarras student ambassador along with five other Year 12 students in the 'Lessons From Auschwitz' programme which enabled me to travel to Poland, visit the notorious camps, and then feedback my experiences to Year 9 history classes.

Finally, from a position of thinking about life beyond Balcarras, I have had so much guidance and support from the Sixth Form and careers team, no matter how many times I have changed my mind about what I want to do in the future. If you are looking for a Sixth Form that is an exciting, vibrant, welcoming and supportive community, full of opportunity no matter what your interests, and one which gets the best out of its students academically and creatively, then Balcarras is one I would definitely recommend!



Iden Beswick (Year 11 Winchcombe)

Plans: to study zoology at university

In the first instance, going from Winchcombe school to Balcarras was terrifying! The size difference of schools was scary enough in itself, but what I found really daunting was the sheer number of new people - both students in Year 12 and Year 13, as well as the teachers - that I would be meeting. Thankfully, I had no need to worry. Everyone was extremely welcoming, and I felt as though I was part of the Balcarras community in no time at all.

The range of courses made it easier to narrow my choices down to four at A-level and the passionate teaching of these courses helped reignite my interests every day. Whenever I have encountered any challenges or have struggled with the demands of A-level courses - be it the volume of work to do, or the added challenge and difficult of A-levels themselves - or any other pastoral issue that I may have seen as a problem - there has always someone ready, willing and happy to help. The camaraderie among the students is excellent, and the support from the Sixth Form team is ever present.

Along with pastoral support and guidance there are also lots of opportunities for extracurricular activities like STEM Ambassadors and the school production. All of these opportunities and experiences have helped prepare me for my next steps after Balcarras, and I have applied to go and study zoology at university. With the regular PSHE and personal development sessions, Balcarras has helped me to become better both academically and socially.

This is why if I had to go back and choose where to go post-16, I would absolutely choose Balcarras all over again.



Kyle Chong (Year 11 Cleeve)

Plans: to study Computer Science at university

When I was applying for Sixth Form, I was looking for an academic environment with a community of which is passionate for new knowledge, and this led me to Balcarras. There is no doubt that A-level is a long and challenging journey, however, here in Balcarras being surrounded by a number of other motivated, discipline students, this prolonged journey seems to be a lot easier, and even enjoyable! The teachers in Balcarras are also very supportive and well-experienced. It is clear that they have not only been teaching their courses for a number of years, but are also incredibly passionate about them, and this enthusiasm is infectious. I think this is the main reason why the flow of the lessons is so smooth, and students can always acquire new knowledge in the most efficient way.

At Balcarras I have also enjoyed the fact that there is a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities that go alongside A-level studies. There are often trips and various opportunity for students to attend. These experiences are always inspiring as they enhance the understanding of subjects beyond the scope of day-to-day A-level lessons and topics that seldom get discussed inside the classroom. My personal favourite of the enrichment opportunities I have enjoyed was a maths conference that a number of students and I were able to attend held by the AMSP at the University of Bath. Here we met mathematicians from other Sixth Forms. Most importantly for me, this was where I had a moment of enlightenment due to one of the talks given by the mathematicians, and it was this that led me to my EPQ topic. I am looking forward to achieving my goal of reaching university, but in the meantime I know I will enjoy my remaining time here in Balcarras.

Balcarras Sixth Form

2025



For more information contact:

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