



Balfour Primary School

Full Governing Body Minutes

2nd October 2025

Present	Kirstin Baker (KB), Alan Gunn (AG) - Head, Ray Leeke (RL), Shelley Baker (SB), Alun Price (AP) Michaela Francis-Hicks (MFH), Adam Knott (AK), Marcus O'Dair (MO), Thomas Holman (TH)
Apologies	Katie Wood (KW), Victoria Jones (VJ)
In attendance	Caroline Stabb, Clerk to Governors
Quorum	9 out of 11 governors were present so the meeting was quorate (at least 50% of governors present)

Governor questions and comments to the SLT are highlighted in bold

Decisions and approvals are in bold CAPITALS

1. Welcome and apologies

KB welcomed all governors and staff to the meeting. Apologies are noted above. KB welcomed Caroline Stabb, new Clerk to Governors and introduced the FGB.

2. Declaration of business

CS distributed the declaration of business forms for all Governors to sign. SB asked if Balfour had access to [Governor Hub](#) a tool which can automate the sign off of documents. This is used at Varndeen. SB to send details to CS.

3. Approval of previous minutes

Minutes of the meeting on 9th July 2025 were approved.

4. Election of chair and vice chair

KB is stepping down as chair after 5 years. KB will remain on the board as Finance Lead. RL was elected as the new Chair and TH elected to the position of Vice Chair during the meeting.



5. Head Teachers Report

Intake and Census Update

- AG noted that there are a few changes to the initial report.
- The current enrolment number is 690 students, slightly below the expected 692 but still an increase of 19 students from last year. A few pupils left on Census Day, but overall numbers remain strong.
- There is a typo in the behaviour section which should have shown two prejudice-based incidents that were from a previous report and should be removed.

Attainment

- Overall attainment is above national average across the school.
- Despite significant investment in supporting disadvantaged students, outcomes remain below expectations. We are still seeing underperformance, both in absolute terms and when compared to national average, local authority and similar schools.
- Positively, the belonging data shows disadvantaged pupils feel connected to school. However, this sense of connection isn't yet translating into academic achievement.
- Closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged children is essential. While overall attendance is better at Balfour, attendance among our vulnerable children remains lower. This disconnect needs to be explored and understood more deeply so that we can identify the barriers and put effective support in place.
- Sandra Mulholland (SM) Deputy Head, is working closely with the Year Leaders to focus on all disadvantaged pupils. This includes understanding the specific barriers they face, holding regular pupil review meetings to monitor progress and ensuring that accelerated progress is a target for every disadvantaged pupil. A key challenge is that many of these pupils join the school already behind in Reception. The focus is not only on helping them catch up but also on ensuring they maintain that progress over time.
- Importantly, some of the children who require additional support are SEN but not disadvantaged, which means their progress and support cannot rely solely on additional interventions. Instead, it must come through the quality of their day-to-day classroom experience, shaped by the expectations set by both the teacher and the pupil.
- Every single child undergoes some form of assessment at Balfour, so every child should be on our radar. Our systems must ensure no child is overlooked and that teaching strategies are tailored to enable progress for all.
- Looking at the overall results, they are very strong, a positive reflection of the work being done across the school. We must remain sharply focused on the outcomes for our disadvantaged children. While everything we do to support disadvantaged pupils will also benefit all learners, we must be mindful that this can sometimes unintentionally widen the attainment gap. That's why targeted, outcome-focused strategies are important.
- Finally, we need to be careful not to make assumptions, particularly that disadvantaged pupils won't be pushed to Greater Depth (GDS) even when they have the potential. High expectations must apply to all children, regardless of background.



Q: Do we have any feedback from parents of disadvantaged children? AG explained that they are shifting the focus towards building aspiration, not only for our children but also for their parents. The goal is to foster a stronger sense of connection with the school, which they believe is essential for long-term engagement and success.

Q: What else can we do to make a meaningful difference? Will you be setting targets for underperforming groups? AG emphasised that the focus for teachers should be to ensure that disadvantaged children perform at the same level as their non-disadvantaged peers. Governors noted the progress being made by Sandra Mulholland in supporting disadvantaged pupils. AG emphasised that, with limited intervention capacity, the focus must remain on quality first teaching, strong classroom practice and positive teacher–child–family relationships, as many high-needs pupils are not disadvantaged.

School Improvement Plan

- The School Improvement Plan focuses on three core priorities: Achievement, Belonging and Community. A key target is to be 10% above national figures for Greater Depth Standard (GDS) in reading, writing, and maths.
- SB raised a thought-provoking question about the phrase “families on the fringe of the community.” SB suggested it would be clearer and more inclusive to rephrase as “those who don’t feel they belong to the community.”
- MO made a reflective note to consider whether the outdoor learning and child-led approaches should sit more explicitly under the belonging strand of the Improvement Plan. AG reinforced that belonging runs through every aspect of the plan and that the connection between belonging and achievement is central to the school’s approach.
- There was discussion around child interest-led and outdoor learning and it was emphasised that this doesn’t mean all children should be outdoors for the sake of it, the focus is on getting the right balance and ensuring the approach supports belonging and achievement.
- A key point was made that Belonging (B) and Community (C) are the route to Achievement (A). All three priorities are important, but helping children become active, contributing members of a community supports a strong sense of belonging. At the same time, without academic achievement, children may struggle to succeed in secondary school so there needs to be intentional alignment across all priorities.
- The group agreed on the importance of refreshing the 4 R’s (Responsible, Respectful, Reflective, Resilient) and making them more visible and meaningful across the school community.
- RL said that parents and pupils need a clear understanding of what they are “belonging to” to enable the 4 R’s to play a key role in defining that shared identity and culture. Values and vision must be clearly communicated and consistently reflected in school practices. TH emphasised the value of getting parents more involved in the school’s values, helping them understand and reinforce these behaviours at home. MO supported this and suggested weaving the values and 4 R’s more intentionally into

Q: What should the monitoring focus be? AG emphasised that there must be a clear and sustained focus on disadvantaged pupils.



Q: Should there be a stronger link between learning behaviours and the school's core values?

It was noted that the 4 R's (Responsible, Respectful, Reflective, Resilient) could be more visible and embedded especially within the community and amongst parents

Q: Relevance and clarity of the current agreed school values? AG agreed that reviewing the school's values would be beneficial as part of the broader belonging strategy.

Financial Update

- Automatic pay rises for UPR staff (no longer performance-based) have contributed to significant financial pressure.
- The school receives £400 less per pupil than the local authority average which equals £280,000 gap across 700 pupils.
- A finance committee will be established with KB, RL, LC, MFH and AG to provide better oversight and support. The committee will handle items that would normally be on the main governing body agenda and will fulfil the statutory responsibility for 6 finance review meetings per year.

Q: How sustainable are current staffing costs given the ongoing pay rise obligations? AG confirmed that this will need to be reviewed in the coming months to assess long-term affordability. Hopefully, this can be managed through natural attrition and flexible working.

Q: Can additional funding or grants be secured to close the funding gap? AG said that this will need to be reviewed and Lisa Colington (LC) will be invited to the next FGB meeting to discuss potential options. Possible cost-saving measures, such as reducing the cleaning budget, may be considered.

Q: What is the plan if the revised £38,000 overspend cannot be addressed within this financial year? Lisa Colington (LC) will be invited to the next FGB meeting to discuss potential options.

Thrive Together School Alliance

- The school is part of an alliance with Hive, Dorothy Stringer, Brackenbury, Mile Oak, and Queen's Park schools. A joint staff inset in September featured disadvantaged education expert Mark Rowlands and received positive feedback. An operations officer has been hired to coordinate alliance work and will be able to circulate a regular communication document with the governing body papers. Joint CPD programs run every half term for teachers at different career stages across the alliance schools.



6. Governor Activities & FGB Membership

Governors were asked whether they wished to make any changes to their current monitoring roles. Following discussion, it was agreed that the following governors would be responsible for the activities listed below.

- Finance – Kirstin Baker
- Belonging / Oracy – Ray Leeke
- Disadvantaged Pupils – Katie Wood
- Safeguarding – Shelley Baker
- Transition – Adam Knott
- Health & Safety / Behaviour – Alun Price
- EYFS – Tom Holman
- EDI – Marcus Odair
- Pupil Voice – Victoria Jones

7. Vacancies

The Governing Body currently has a Local Authority Governor vacancy, which the Governor Support Team has advertised and is actively seeking to fill.

8. Policies for approval

The following start-of-year documents were discussed for approval: KCSIE, Code of Conduct, Scheme of Delegation, Governor Expenses Policy, Governor Visits Policy, and Standing Orders. KCSIE has been circulated to Governors and a safeguarding session will be arranged with the Safeguarding Lead. CS will confirm the status of the remaining documents with LC.

9. Actions

Action	By Whom	Status
Add Disadvantaged Pupils as a dedicated agenda item in future meetings.	CS	
Arrange for a presentation or speaker to attend and provide a deeper insight into how this group is being supported.	AG	
Change language in school improvement plan regarding community belonging from "fringe of our community" to "those that might feel they don't belong".	AG	
Establish a finance committee and set dates	KB	
Set dates for the 2025 / 2026 FGB	CS	
Update the monitoring leads document and circulate policy and pro forma	CS	
Review current school values and vision to ensure alignment with the belonging strategy. Featuring them more consistently in school communications and displays	AG	
Invite Lisa Collington to the next FGB to discuss finance	AG	
CS will confirm the status of the remaining documents with LC	CS	



10. AOB

After 30 years of dedicated service to the school, Dawn Loader will be retiring. The Governors would like to express their thanks and mark this special occasion by making a presentation during an assembly. The date for this will be confirmed soon.

Date of next meeting: 27th November 2025

This meeting will include the following:

- Presentation on disadvantaged pupils - TBC
- Finance discussion (LC)

Time closed: 07:05pm

Agreed as a true record and approved for circulation

Signed: _____ (Chair of Governors)

Dated: