

Balfour Primary School

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20.03.2025, 5:30pm

Present:	Kirstin Baker (KB), Alan Gunn (AG) - Head, Ray Leeke (RL), Katie Wood (KW), Shelley Baker (SB), Alun Price (AP) Michaela Francis-Hicks (MFH), Jordan Kaleta (JK), Victoria Jones (VJ) Adam Knott (AK)
Apologies:	Marcus O'Dair (MO), Thomas Holman (TH)
In Attendance:	Jessica Sullivan-Wrenn Clerk to Governors. Staff; Sandra Mulholland, Natasha Paling
Quorum:	10 out of 12 governors were present so the meeting was quorate (at least 50% of governors present)
Acronyms:	SIP = School Improvement Plan. CPD = Continuous Professional development. NI = National Insurance. SOA = Schedule of accommodation. AOB = any other business.

Governor Questions and comment to the SLT are highlighted **bold**.
Decisions and approvals, in bold **CAPITALS**.

1. Welcome, Apologies

KB welcomed all governors and staff to the meeting. Apologies are noted above.

2. New co-opted Governor. AKs CV was circulated prior to the meeting and reviewed by Governors.

Governor **DECIDED** to co-opt AK to the Balfour Governor board and induction will commence. KB thanked AK for attending.

3. Declaration of business interests

No additional business interests on the meeting agenda were raised.

4. Approval of last minutes

The minutes from 16.01.2025 were circulated prior to the meeting. **APPROVED**
Matters arising - None

5. Guest presenters Sandra Mulholland and Natasha Paling

Accompanying document: belonging+ action plan Balfour primary 7.3.25.

- Balfour is taking part in a belonging survey aimed at improving sense of belonging in schools. The accompanying action plan has been devised using information gathered in 460 pupil surveys. Pupils from key stage 2, (years 3-6) were asked 12 questions regarding their belonging at school.
- In October 2024, Lecturers from Sussex University, Matt Easterbrook and Ian Haddon, met with SLT to go through the 'discover report', and decide how to utilise the survey information and make improvements at Balfour. The 3 key areas sited for improvement are: Class participation / bias of belonging / transitions between year groups.
- The strategies were presented to staff at January INSET. Staff buy-in has been good and staff are really pleased with progress and the uptake of participation in classes. Sandra is still working with Matt and Ian refining the approach in the action plan
- SM will be presenting to other Primary schools on 25.03.25
- The Pupil premium strategy will be aligned with this belonging strategy.

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- Natasha supports Pupil Premium families pastorally, putting in lots of energy, her own time and enthusiasm into the project.
- Overall persistence absence is 30%. Pupil Premium accounts for 10% (78 children). It is important that families raise their attendance especially those receiving additional support and have persistent absence.
- 'Belonging' is an ongoing project and the action plan will be updated and governors informed. Next year we intend to have more incentives and embed the belonging project further.

Q: Year 6 to year 7 transitions, is a great focus. Balfour has a project running with Dorothy Stringer and Varndean secondary schools.

Q: Will Balfour be supporting other schools with belonging project? Staff would like to and hope to do so.

Q: Has the term 'belonging' been clearly defined? Its important for those that don't have this sense of belonging, through low attendance or outcomes – what does it mean for the individual. Can create CPD and principles to help track. Governors and staff agreed and will determine a clear definition for this term.

Governors agreed Sandra is making great progress and praised her enthusiasm and hard-work.

Q: Parents input is important, what are you doing to encourage this? We could be more explicit with parents. Half term visits. We do need to build in more of their input.

Q: Is there a separate action plan for disadvantaged pupils? Yes. We always track

Q: Do you have access to the attend form? Yes, and some families have used the service but next steps aren't always clear. It is important to build trust and handle conversations sensitively.

Q: Considering the mental health of parents is important, to be respectful. We don't want any perceived threat, as we need to encourage relationships.

Q: We could look at other schools EYFS and see their strategy? Next week SLT will be going to Queens Park Primary, to get some advice on pupil premium in EYFS. Following up with meetings from last year. Queens Park have a family coach.

Q: Do you do home visits for your reception intake Pupil Premium families? no. It is delicate situation and needs to be handled with care, not to offend or pressurise. This could be piloted by 1 class?

Governors briefly discussed piloting a home visits scheme. It was concluded: there are many barriers to making this successful, siting; home visits would be too staff intensive and pose a potential risk to staff members as lone workers.

Q: Governors praised Natasha for her work. The volume and range of additional tasks she performs are astounding and having a positive impact on the school and its pupils/families. Natasha takes this on additionally to her paid role. Natasha has recently been voted teacher of the year!

NP SM left the meeting at 5:50pm

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ACTION	PERSON	TIMEFRAME
2:1 Start co-opt Governor induction. Update GIAS, LA and website.	JSW/ SS	ASAP
5:1 Governors to be updated on Belonging definition and ongoing action plan.	AG	Autumn term

6. Head Teacher report

Accompanying documents: Spring 2025 Head Teacher report / SIP 24-25 / of Balfour primary school attendance summary first spring term / Balfour SPA visit spring term 2025.

Intake:

- Numbers have increased since Census, now at 95% full capacity
- Balfour is in conversation with LA about additional funding for school uniform for those new pupils but there is not a budget.
- 3 new families viewing the school today.
- Balfour is oversubscribed this year. 97 leavers and 90 intake EYFS. This success is due to factors including; A 'GOOD' OFSTED / the stay and play scheme / MFH held open evenings and has been very accommodating to enable parents to come in. The presentation to parents has been brilliant in small groups, parents are better able to focus and more opportunity to talk with staff.

Attendance:

- Balfour is in the top 25% for attendance in Brighton and Hove.
- Persistent absence is low. Disadvantaged attendance needs to be the focus for improvement. This will include check-ins and call's with parents to devise plans as to how the school can help get the pupils in.

Finance: last week AG met with LA to discuss budget.

- Balfour is running with staffing at the bare minimum required to keep pupils safe. If this structure continues there will be an in-year deficit of £205,000. Cumulatively across three years Balfour will be £866,000 in debt.
- A request has been put forward to the LA, as Balfour receives less money per pupil than other schools. £400 less per pupil than the average school in Brighton and Hove, due to factors including lower deprivation levels.
- Governors were given an example of how the deficit is expanding. Fully funded teacher pay rise, costs the school, £70,000, as the grant doesn't cover Balfour staffing costs. NI increases will cost the school £10,000. (increase cost £70k- grant £60K)
- It is not possible to cut any more staff. There are currently only 8 fix-term contract support staff. 23 classes with 15 staff and will not factor in high need children or staff lunch breaks. SLT have to run playtimes and lunchtime. Re-structuring and redundancies leaves the school short staffed and is not feasible.
- Balfour is one school spread over two sites, meaning there are twice the costs; two offices, two lunch halls both requiring staff, SLT are needed on both sites – currently only three SLT are in school every-day, spread across both sites, plus many additional rooms to heat. Cuts have been made wherever possible.
- If Governors agree, Balfour will submit a £62,000 in year deficit to LA. Accumulative deficit of £226,000, as costing are likely to come under the licenced deficit (allowed £190,000, predicted £160,000)
- Year 2 will submit an in-year surplus of 126,000. Though will still be £100,000 in deficit.
- Year 3 should be £382 in credit.

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- Using 2015 figures put on to 2025 staff and pupil numbers income has increase by about £750K whilst staff costs have risen by £1.4m
- Children with EHCP's costs an additional £15,000 to the school, as funding doesn't cover need costs.
- Limited budgets are making it extremely difficult to meet the needs of all the children.
- Current finance situation is negatively impacting staff wellbeing.

Staffing:

- 1 staff member off due to long-term stress sickness. 1 Support staff member is away for over fortnight. 1 resignation from a staff member that has been on long-term sick.
- Next year 7 staff members need to be recruited but only 1 will be permanently employed (3 for maternity cover, 1 sabbatical, 2 'falling role' temp contracts need renewing)
- 4 staff currently on maternity.
- Primary schools across the city are in a similar position.
- All staff are working as hard as they can and putting in extra hours and not being paid. Financial strains are affecting staff wellbeing.

Q: Excellent news about being over-subscribed, are you getting much uptake from Nursery on site? Yes, nearly all children from nursery are joining Balfour.

Q: Parent governor suggested to involve current Balfour parents at intake events. For example, having a range of parents, FAB members, staff and Governors at the welcome meeting. AG and staff agreed.

Q: in the budget what accounts for the leap between year 1 and 2? AG was able to name many changes and cuts that could / will be in place. For example, it has been assumed the assistant head teacher will be working elsewhere and not replaced, SBM reduced hours and reduction of year 1 support staff.

Q: Is there any prospect of merging the 2 schools? The LA could have funding, it is worth enquiring and looking at how it could work.

Q: Interesting to see how the space could be reconsidered. Governors suggested putting through a request to LA for a more modest capital investment, to re-address issues and better utilise the space. Building a new two form entry school.

Q: Governors are always considering what is best for the school – what can be provided vs the income.

Governors are not willing to reduce PAN any further.

Q: Could do costing for reducing down to a 2-form school? What current situation is versus what the site could look like and how changes would enhance pupil welfare and reduce costs. LA could be looking for satellite sites? JK offered to devise SOA.

Q: What happens if Governors don't approve deficit budget? LA would likely take over the running of the school.

Q: Governors are not happy with the situation the school is in. Governors discussed not approving the deficit budget. Governors suggested writing to the LA but were

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unsure if it will make an impact. Balfour are currently drafting a letter to LA, requesting advice on staffing matters.

Q: Governors thanked Alan, Michaela and SLT for all their help and hard-work.

7. Safeguarding updates (included in HT report)

SB informed Governors of the recent safeguarding meeting.

Recommendations:

- Training. Looking into additional training for staff who are dealing with secondary school type issues.
- Intervening with complaints.
- Improved communication and training.

Q: What is AG view on the pressure SEND need is placing on the school and how to respond. It's an issue where parents will have high expectations but are going to meet a service that is not funded to meet those expectations. Pressure is high. Staff will attend training. Lot of pressure on capacity. Explore managed move for a child – now 100 in one year group up to 123 and approximately 15 have SEND need. Behaviour internal suspensions rise, working closely with families and BHISS. Parents are involved and generally supportive but do have high expectations.

Q: Is most of the additional funding spent on 1-1 support? It would not be specifically listed as 1-1, would be referred to as high level support or targeted support from an adult for specifically sited reasons. Individual needs are high and the school is cleverly placing staff.

Q: Behaviour issues seem to increased. 15 of 22 incidents based on race. What is being done to tackle that? Education is important. These are young children with limitations in understanding and are prone to notice difference. Statistics are not higher than it has been and SLT are working with LA to reduce incidents. The diversity of the school is growing and this exposure to some children is new. Personal development curriculum is strong but real-world experience can be low.

Balfour girls football team will be representing Brighton and Hove Albion in the National finals for the primary school tournament 11th June. This is fantastic news, the school have been celebrating this success. Sponsorship for their trip is needed.

Q: which students play year 6? It is mainly the older children (year 6), but we ensure all students can represent our teams, based on skill not year group.

8. Review of S.I.P. Termly monitoring of priorities

Not covered in meeting

9. Governors updated on summer term event plans

No update yet, will be carried forward to next meeting.

ACTION	PERSON	TIMEFRAME
6:1 assess data for SOA on changes to school site. 3 form and 2form.	JK	Summer term

10. Governor activities

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Activity	ACTION	Attendance	Date	Comments
FGB MEMBERSHIP VACANCY	none			
	none	New governor AK 20.03.25		AK suggested role: focus on year 6 transitions.
MONITORING	Pupil voice, EYFS, SAFEGUARDING, SEND	VJ, TH, SB, KW		TH wasn't present but uploaded his report to SharePoint (2025 visit reports)
MONITORING FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEND lead has been struggling, due to the strained budget. Governors have a duty to support staff wellbeing. Due to focused improvements in teaching and learning, children's needs are being met in classrooms even without TA support but it puts immense pressure on individuals. Changes to catchment area applications means more EHTPs are being requested. This year the general percentage of SEND has risen across city. Successes; SEND pupils report to be happy and are reaching predicted outcomes. H&S Governor in to observe lockdown procedures and a SNT meeting with year leaders. Lack of learning support is highlighting an impact on pupil behaviour. General consensus that behaviour needs addressing and highlights the importance of reviewing and embedding positive behaviours in new pupils. Pupil parliament, discussed friendless and kindness and pupils requested more balls at playtime. 			
SKILLS AUDIT	TBC			
TRAINING	Attending Governance conference.	RL	29.03.25	
GOVERNOR VISITS	HT Mid year review completed.	KB, RL	10.02.25	
POLICIES reviewed on SchoolBus	Teachers model Appraisal policy and capability School fund terms of reference	Governors are quorate		APPROVED APPROVED

11.Actions from previous meetings. Still to be done listed in bold.

ACTION LOG from FGB meeting 16.01.25	PERSON	TIMEFRAME
1:1 Contact MO regarding absence	JSW	n/a
1:2 Recruit a new Clerk to the Governing Board	KB	COMPLETED
4:1 Add line about the school's position on using the School Fund to cover any ongoing maintenance costs associated with environmental project expenditure	LC	COMPLETED
4:2 Recirculate the ToR for final approval	LC	COMPLETED

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4:3 Consider the potential for a school fund working group to be set up in the future.	KB	TBC
5:1 Consider the potential for a parent survey to gauge perception of school in light of staff reductions	AG	TBC in discussion with SLT
5:2 Arrange staff wellbeing visit	SB	TBC
5:3 Consider creating a summer term event by way of thank you from the GB to the staff and be visible to children	SB/KB	Governors suggested attending school picnic.
5:4 Governors to confirm attendance at any MLT meeting by emailing MFH	Govs/ MFH	ASAP
7:1 Behaviour policy draft to come to GB for discussion, prior to approval, to ensure represented by all stakeholders	clerk	May/July FGB
7:2 Link Governor visit report to be added to next FGB agenda	clerk	COMPLETED
8:1 SB and TH to provide their monitoring visit feedback at the next FGB meeting.	Clerk	COMPLETED
8:2 Governing Board skills audit	KB/clerk	TBC
8:3 Approve Teacher Appraisal policy	clerk	COMPLETED
8:4 SStokes to share website compliance toolkit with MFH	SStokes	COMPLETED
8:5 Governor register to be set up in school office	MFH	COMPLETED
8:6 Governors to check their profile information and email any updates to LC.	ALL Gov	ASAP

12. AOB

Governors suggested attending the picnic hosted by the school on the last day of term. An opportunity for Governors to thank and celebrate with staff and pupils.

Governors thanked Jessica for stepping in as Clerk and wished her well in the future.

Date of next meeting:	FGB –15.05.2025 5:30pm
To include:	presentation Oracy and Spoken Language
Time closed:	6:55pm

Agreed as a true record and approved for circulation:

Signed:

Date: 28.03.2025



(Chair of Governors)

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