

The National Nurturing Schools Programme  
Assessment Report



<b>Establishment name and address</b>	Balsall Common Primary School Balsall Street East Balsall Common West Midlands CV77FS
<b>Headteacher/Principal</b>	Mark Mitchell
<b>NNSP trained staff</b>	Manpreet Bains (Deputy Headteacher) and Safron Ball (former Assistant Senco)
<b>Assessment date</b>	13/3/26
<b>Assessor</b>	Dr Suus-anna Harskamp
<b>Trainer</b>	Miranda Collins
<b>Review date</b>	2029

## Assessors Summary

This report cannot reflect the hard work that goes on at school every day. A comprehensive evidence file and related documents have been provided as part of the assessment process by the school. This includes attendance and exclusion data and Case Studies for Partnership, Community and The Boxall Profile, along with a clear understanding of The Six Principles of Nurture, evidenced in the application and Principles into Practice report.

Balsall Primary School is a 3-form entry setting in the heart of Balsall Common Village, Coventry. It is a bright, lively school with a passionate and committed leadership team. The school prides itself on the values of trust, respect, initiative, community and risk, and its holistic approach to education.

The school website has a very welcoming video from the Head, which encapsulates his vision for the school. The website describes, *'School is a busy place where learning is not just confined to the academic curriculum. Children learn how to relate to others, how to build a strong community and develop resilience in their character that enables each one to succeed.... It is a privilege to play our part in enabling them to realise all that they can become when they commit to learning for life.'*

As highlighted in their Ofsted report in 2025, *Pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour. They understand the importance of being kind and caring to each other. The school's values are understood and modelled by all. Pupils are respectful to each other and staff.* These observations and the school vision were reflected in the conversations I had throughout the assessment.

### **Examples of excellent practice include:**

#### **Leadership vision**

*"Nurture in education is understanding and prioritising personal development and welfare over all else. I genuinely believe and have seen the evidence that the focus on personal development and welfare leads to academic success. Knowing the children is key to relationships - this is the difference that children feeling known makes".*

Leadership commitment (specifically from Mark (Head Teacher), Manpreet (Deputy Head) and Safron (former assistant SENCo)) has been a significant factor in the successful development of the nurturing approach. School leaders all described nurture as a strategic priority and have embedded it within the school development plan and wider work. The school places a strong emphasis on developing well-rounded pupils who contribute positively to their community. Personal development and wellbeing are viewed as fundamental to this aim.

Safron and Manpreet attended initial training linked to the nurture programme as they had already shown a strong interest in relational approaches and were keen to explore how nurture principles could support the school's existing work. The school had already been developing a values-based approach to behaviour and relationships and nurture, therefore aligned closely, providing a useful framework for bringing together existing practices. It helped the school move from isolated pockets of practice to a consistent whole-school culture built around the school values. Manpreet and Safron explained, "We were already doing a lot of these things, but they were happening in pockets across the school. The programme helped us roll it out more consistently and gave us a framework for explaining why we do what we do."

Leaders emphasised that strong relationships form the foundation of effective learning and, as a result, staff are encouraged to prioritise relationship building, particularly at the start of the school year. Mark described this approach by saying; "We prioritise relationship building first. English and Maths can wait for a little while. If children feel known and understood, everything else becomes easier."

Embarking on the programme has created opportunities to build professional networks and strengthen links with other schools, including feeder secondary settings, offering improved transition discussions.

The work has also had an impact on relationships with parents. Establishing strong relationships with families is an essential part of the school's work. Once trust has been developed, parents become strong advocates for the school. In one instance, a parent whose child had received support from the school offered funding to contribute towards nurture resources, reflecting the value they placed on the school's approach. Relationships with families were consistently described as a strength of the school, and parents spoke warmly about the support their children receive and the positive relationships they have developed with staff. Many emphasised that the school recognises that every child is different. One parent commented, "No two children are the same, and the school understands that. They don't take a one-size-fits-all approach."

Parents also described the school as maintaining a strong sense of community, and despite being a relatively large school, several parents felt that it still had a "family feel". Communication was highlighted as a key strength. Parents reported that staff are open and honest when discussing concerns and that issues are addressed quickly when they arise. The visibility of the headteacher was also frequently mentioned. Parents described the headteacher as approachable and present around the school site.

### **Whole-School Culture and Ethos**

*"Schools wrap around children, not stretch children to make them fit."*

Across the school community, there was strong evidence that nurture principles have started to influence the culture of the school. Staff described leadership as modelling this

approach through coaching conversations, reflective discussions and a willingness to work alongside colleagues in a variety of situations. As one leader explained, “If we don’t change something, the behaviour won’t change. We try to unpick what happened and think about what we can do differently next time.”

The school does not rely on traditional behaviour rules. Instead, expectations are framed through a set of shared school values which are taught and reinforced regularly through assemblies, classroom activities and daily conversations. Children showed strong familiarity with these values, and staff were able to talk about how they influence behaviour in school. Staff also model these values in their interactions, helping to embed them as part of everyday school culture. Pupils enthusiastically performed the school’s “values rap”, which reinforces the key messages in a memorable way. They talked about other school raps and how Mr Mitchell (Head) entertained them with magic, too!

The school places an emphasis on the idea that mistakes are part of learning. Staff described creating classroom environments where pupils feel able to take risks, ask questions and learn from errors without fear of judgement.

Staff reported a noticeable shift in the language used to discuss behaviour. Rather than describing children as “naughty” or focusing on misbehaviour, staff now tend to ask questions about what might be underlying a child’s actions and recognising “all behaviour as communication” and “connection before correction”.

Teachers described this as developing greater professional curiosity about behaviour. Staff are encouraged to consider what a child might be communicating through their behaviour and what support they may need. As one member of staff explained; “We’re much more likely to ask ‘why is this happening?’ rather than just responding to the behaviour itself.”

Creating a safe environment for children to express their emotions was highlighted as a key aspect of the school’s approach. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their feelings and are supported by adults in understanding and regulating their emotions.

Children described the school as a place where they feel comfortable sharing concerns. One pupil explained, “You can talk to the teachers, and they help you if you’re feeling stressed.”

The school runs a wellbeing breakfast club, which provides a calm start to the day for some pupils. Children can play games, talk with staff and settle before lessons begin. For some pupils, morning physical activity sessions are also offered as a way of supporting emotional regulation. Support staff often check in with pupils throughout the day, particularly those who may be experiencing difficulties, and this was shared by the pupils themselves too (particularly in upper KS2). These informal conversations help staff monitor pupils’ emotional wellbeing and offer reassurance when needed.

The school counsellor works with pupils who require additional emotional support. The counsellor also supports staff in understanding the needs of particular pupils.

Pom pom club was mentioned several times as an important space for children to have an activity, which also offers the opportunity to talk, no matter what that may be. One parent referred to this approach as “the idea of a village around a child”.

### **The Environment and Physical Spaces**

*“It is their space, and we want to show we know it to be important”.*

The physical environment of the school reflects its commitment to nurturing practice. Many classrooms include “nurture nooks” where pupils can take a short break if they are feeling overwhelmed or need time to regulate their emotions. These spaces include comfortable seating and calming resources. Staff explained that these areas send a message that emotions are recognised and supported within the classroom. Additional spaces are available throughout the school where pupils can speak to a trusted adult or spend time in a quieter environment if needed. Children themselves identified several areas they find calming, including reading corners, the library and other quiet spaces within the school.

The school has invested in improving its outdoor environment. Leaders described the outdoor space as an important part of children’s development, providing opportunities for physical activity, sensory experiences and social interaction. Staff noted that improving the outdoor environment also sends an important message to pupils - that their experiences and wellbeing matter. The development of these spaces was supported by the parent association, further strengthening community involvement in the school.

Staff space and resources have also been invested in, including the staff room. Annual surveys for staff to ensure staff voice is heard and responded to (and included in SDP), and the result is an increase in survey outcomes and results. Staff emphasised the importance of teamwork and shared learning as a strength, as “ultimately we want things to be better for the children”.

### **Pupil voice and experiences**

*“Children are encouraged to be unapologetically themselves”.*

Pupil voice plays an important role in the life of the school, and children are positive about this. The school council is made up of a diverse mix of pupils, representing the school population, and has led on initiatives like buddy benches, changes to school meals, PE uniform and environmental initiatives. Children also take on a range of responsibilities, including buddy roles and leadership positions within the school. Pupils described feelings listened to by adults and parents were confident that their views would be taken seriously.

Transition is well thought through and intentional in practice to support pupils. Reception staff report noticing the difference between children who attend the school nursery versus those from other settings. Year 2-3 transition is also considered due to how different it can feel for the children. Visits and shared performances are planned to help children know Year 3 and how it might look and feel. Parents also highlighted this as important. Transition from nursery to reception was identified as a strength for one parent who had experienced both in-school and out-of-school transitions. They shared that, “The connection meant my child didn't really feel that massive change. My only regret is that my other children didn't have that experience.” Another parent added how well the school focused on transition later on in school, too, with the older children.

The school maintains strong links with the local community. Pupils take part in charity initiatives and community activities, helping them develop a sense of belonging and social responsibility within their community. The school also works to ensure that extracurricular opportunities are accessible to all pupils. Recognising that some families may find online booking systems difficult, alternative arrangements have been introduced to ensure that disadvantaged pupils can still access clubs and activities. This has led to increased participation and greater inclusivity.

As a result of the work embedded over the last few years, school leaders report a reduction in suspensions, improvements in staff wellbeing and the recognition that supporting staff wellbeing has a direct impact on pupils' experiences. The school has observed improvements in academic data over time, reinforcing the belief that emotional wellbeing supports learning. As a result, pupils describe the school using words such as fun, kind, friendly and calm.

#### **Quotes from the assessment day:**

##### **Staff:**

“If we don't change something, the behaviour won't change.”

“Adults are now asking more questions about the 'why' when things are challenging.”

“It made me more aware of the nurture we give to children – you often do it without thinking.”

“We mean what we say, and we say what we mean.”

##### **Families:**

“It is supportive, consistently.”

“No two children are the same, and that is reflected by the school.”

“For a big school, it maintains a real family vibe.”

**Pupils:**

“Children feel they are allowed to express emotions and be guided through them by the adults.”

“People are welcomed and can come and not feel uncomfortable.”

“Our school is really fun, and you can be free.”

“When I first joined, I thought it was a big school with big people, but it's actually really enjoyable and fun.”

“Mr Mitchell helps to make people feel safe”.

**Recommendation**

**We recommend Balsall Common Primary School for the National Nurturing Schools Award**