

Inspection of an outstanding school: Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children

4 Wollstonecraft Street, Kings Cross, London N1C 4BT

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 May 2023

Outcome

Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils very much enjoy attending Frank Barnes School. Inspirational deaf and hearing staff inspire pupils to believe they can achieve anything. Consequently, pupils become proud of their deaf identity and culture. Pupils feel that their life chances are greatly improved because of their time at this school. One typical comment from a parent or carer was, 'This school has transformed my child's life.'

Pupils take part in a wide range of activities, including sporting events, cultural visits and trips to the local shops. Pupils learn about important British values, such as tolerance, respect, and the difference between right and wrong.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in class and around the school. It is a calm and orderly environment for everyone. Sometimes, pupils need extra help to manage their feelings. Staff help them to become calm again so that they can get back on with their lessons as soon as possible. Pupils have no concerns about bullying, and they feel safe.

Pupils enjoy learning. They are taught to cooperate and help each other. For example, those who are new to learning British Sign Language (BSL) are well supported by more-advanced pupils. This enables them to learn from each other, and to develop friendships.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Frank Barnes school is a beacon of bilingualism and deaf pride, where English and BSL are taught in parallel. Consequently, pupils quickly learn the skills they need to access the broad curriculum provided. Leaders ensure that staff are qualified and well trained in both BSL and English.

The use of technology is a strength in supporting pupils' communication. Staff record videos of themselves and the pupils to use as teaching tools. Pupils study these videos to learn complex, subject-specific vocabulary. All pupils have their own device which they use to record learning, and to communicate with staff and friends.

As many pupils cannot hear or process sounds, reading is taught using a visual phonics approach that has been specifically designed for deaf children. Pupils learn the hand shapes for different letter sounds. Guided reading sessions and whole-class signed reading sessions inspire pupils to develop a love of reading.

All staff are committed to preparing pupils for the life outside of school. Deaf studies is a real strength of the school. Staff teach about communication skills, assistive technology, the deaf community, and cultural awareness. Its elements help pupils understand their culture and this positively impacts on their own sense of identity and pride. Bringing in role models, such as deaf sports people, or those with disabilities, raises pupils' aspirations and promotes a sense of belonging. It also helps pupils consider their place in the world.

Staff meticulously capture evidence that what has been taught has been learned. Teachers can describe even the smallest steps of progress. They are able to promptly identify where pupils may need extra help. Parents are also encouraged to contribute to assessments through an online platform.

Some pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) beyond their deafness, including autism spectrum disorder and medical conditions. The school's SEND coordinator and speech and language therapist work closely with staff to ensure that these wider needs are met.

Throughout the school there are excellent opportunities for personal development. Pupils take part in weekly sports sessions, including swimming and kayaking. Work with local artists has allowed pupils to explore and share their deaf identity.

The school council is an impressive group of pupils who are clear about their roles and the function of the council. They take their responsibilities very seriously.

Governors and leaders are keen to ensure that staff do not experience undue pressure due to workload demands. Staff speak warmly about the care shown by leaders for their mental health and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Ensuring that pupils are safe is a high priority for school leaders and governors. The culture of keeping pupils safe and putting them at the heart of the school community is very evident.

The systems and processes to support safeguarding are robust. Procedures to check adults before their employment are rigorous. Record-keeping is detailed and safeguarding referrals are reported quickly. Safeguarding leaders challenge external agencies to ensure that decision-making is always in pupils' best interests.

Staff are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities through regular training. Leaders have ensured that staff understand the relationship between safeguarding and pupils' vulnerabilities.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in June 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	100091
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	10240342
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Robert Adam
Headteacher	Dani Sive
Website	www.fbarnes.camden.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Almost all pupils are profoundly deaf and have an education, health and care plan. Some pupils have additional SEND.
- Frank Barnes School accepts pupils from a wide range of local authorities in London and the south east.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other leaders, including curriculum and pastoral leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, science, and communication. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors held discussions with teachers, teaching assistants and governors.

- Inspectors met with members of staff individually and in groups and spoke to pupils at various points during the inspection. Inspectors took account of responses to pupil and staff surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- BSL interpreters accompanied inspectors on their visits to lessons and for discussions with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors looked at records relating to behaviour, bullying, attendance, and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Francis Gonzalez, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gary Rawlings

His Majesty's Inspector

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