

Frank Barnes School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 100091 |
| Local Authority | Camden |
| Inspection number | 276247 |
| Inspection dates | 1–2 February 2006 |
| Reporting inspector | Judith Charlesworth |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ms Jane Stanton- Humphreys Ms Karen Simpson |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Harley Road Swiss Cottage London NW3 3BN |
| Telephone number | 02075864665 |
| Fax number | 02077224415 |

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|--------------------------|-------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Frank Barnes School is a sign bilingual primary school for profoundly deaf children. There are currently 35 on roll. The school is situated in the Swiss Cottage area of the London borough of Camden, but it is a regional resource and takes pupils from 16 London boroughs. It has a diverse cultural and social community and over half the pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. Frank Barnes prides itself on being a primary school first and foremost, offering a mainstream primary curriculum that is taught through the British Sign Language (BSL). Around half the staff are also profoundly deaf and use BSL as their first language. About the same proportion of pupils as in a mainstream primary school have additional special educational needs such as mild learning difficulties or dyspraxia. The school was awarded Beacon status in 2001, and has had two School Achievement awards since then.

Key for inspection grades

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|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade:

What the school should do to improve further

* track pupils' progress more consistently, and assess their performance against level descriptors in the national guidance more accurately; * analyse the data collected to determine how well different groups of pupils are achieving; * refine the self-evaluation process to point more clearly to priorities for development.

Achievement and standards

Grade:

Personal development and well-being

Grade:

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade:

Teaching and learning are good, which is better than the school's self-assessment. However, the quality of teaching is not uniform, and whilst most is good or excellent, some is just adequate. In the most effective lessons, the teacher's communication with the pupils is quick-fire, sensitive, interesting, humorous and above all, continually challenges each pupil to make sure they understand and learn more. In one lesson, for example, the teacher had written the lesson's objective on the board, and all pupils read it. But close questioning revealed that the pupils did not understand the use of the word form in that context; the teacher helped them gain full understanding which was vital to the lesson that followed. Team work between teachers and assistants is outstanding. Staff have very high expectations of pupils to concentrate and look at them when they are talking. This is vitally important as pupils and deaf staff only have their vision to access what is being said. These positive features are not found to the same extent in less effective lessons. Most staff keep careful records of pupils' developing skills but they are not always consistently updated. There are also inconsistencies in matching pupils' skills with the descriptions in the national guidance, and the staff's judgements are not moderated. This means that assessments are not always accurate. However, because staff know pupils very well, the work itself is generally well matched to their individual needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade:

The curriculum is outstanding throughout the school. Planning is good, and the nursery and reception curriculum is very well supported by rich, well-resourced classroom environments where children learn through play. There is an excellent emphasis on developing pupils' language and communication skills throughout all subjects. A cross-curricular, topic-based approach is used well in teaching some subjects which pupils enjoy because it makes lessons interesting. Due to the distance that pupils have to travel, regular after-school clubs are not held. However, there is a breakfast club and the school arranges a number of extra-curricular activities during the year, such as workshops to prepare for the Winter performance. An excellent curricular development is Deaf Studies which gives pupils a positive sense of deaf identity and

understanding of deaf culture, as well as supporting their learning in BSL. Pupils also have Live English lessons to promote their understanding of spoken English and their ability to communicate with the wider hearing community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade:

This area is good, and some aspects are excellent. There is an outstanding commitment to giving pupils equal opportunities for learning in relation to their deafness. This is achieved for individuals by well-constructed plans which take account of each pupil's particular learning needs. In a wider sense, it is achieved by equipping pupils to take their place within both the deaf and hearing communities. The school has access to, and uses, support for working with families for whom English is an additional language. However, this aspect of the school's work does not receive enough attention. The school's safeguarding procedures are good, and it works effectively with other agencies. Excellent support is provided by the speech and language therapists, and the school is quick to call upon external help to meet individuals' emerging needs, should it be necessary. Pupils and parents are given good guidance when the time comes to move to secondary education. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. There is a great emphasis on supporting parents because the school recognises that pupils do best if parents communicate with them in BSL, and can help them with homework. Several forms of parental support are offered, such as BSL lessons and parenting classes and siblings can join in nursery activities so that parents can attend, if required. The school sets various targets for pupils on the basis of a range of assessments and progress against previous targets. However, some assessments are not always consistently or accurately recorded, which leaves holes in the system. Nevertheless, the records provide satisfactory information and because of the staff's detailed knowledge about each individual, pupils work hard and achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade:

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Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I'm sure you remember that I visited your school yesterday to see how well it was working and how well you were all doing. The school staff have been busy over the last few months doing the same thing, and their conclusion is that they think that Frank Barnes was a good school. I was very pleased with what I found yesterday, and I agree; Frank Barnes is a good school.

I found that you make good progress, and particularly, that you learn to communicate very effectively in BSL. I also think that your behaviour and attitude towards your work are excellent. This is largely due to your great relationships with the staff and the good teaching and support you receive. The school is a very friendly place to be in and the staff look after you very well. They give you an interesting range of things to do, including some exciting new work such as Deaf Studies. All of this sets you up very well for success in all that you do, and for your future adult lives.

The head teacher and staff are always striving to improve what they do, and I have noted some areas that I hope will help. I think that: * the staff should look more carefully at your work and how you are progressing to see if they can help you even more than they already do;* the staff should not be so hard on themselves; they should cut down the number of things they want to improve and develop by making some of them a higher priority than others; and* the staff should review some of their documents more regularly in case they need to change what they do, and once they have decided to do something, (like keep records in a certain way), keep it up. That's sometimes difficult for all of us, isn't it?Thank you for letting me sit in on your lessons. I could not have done my job nearly as well without your help and co-operation.