

Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100091
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	323222
Inspection date	11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Stuart Charlton

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	26
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	10
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Phillips
Headteacher	Ms Karen Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Harley Road Swiss Cottage London NW3 3BN

Age group	2–11
Inspection date	11 February 2009
Inspection number	323222

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Frank Barnes is a primary school for profoundly deaf children in the London Borough of Camden. It is recognised as a regional resource and has a catchment area covering 16 London Boroughs. Nearly all pupils travel to and from the school by local authority transport. Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds and a small number have English as an additional language. All teaching is through the medium of British Sign Language. The majority of pupils are from hearing families and so are effectively second language learners. All pupils have a statement of special educational need for hearing impairment or are being assessed for one. Over two thirds have additional needs, mainly associated with autism and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school holds the Investor in People and Healthy School Awards. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Nursery/Reception class. There are 10 children taught on a part-time basis in the 0 to 2 provision which is managed by the school's governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Frank Barnes is an outstanding school. Pupils' achievements are excellent because of very high-quality teaching. Excellent care, guidance and support means their personal development is outstanding. This ensures that across all aspects of school life all pupils make excellent progress in both their personal and academic development. The school is highly successful in its aim: 'To provide high expectations for all deaf children's learning with a commitment to develop the whole child and particularly their deaf identity.' Pupils work and play together very happily in a secure and harmonious environment. All parents speak highly of the school and make comments such as, 'Frank Barnes is a fantastic school where my child has developed very well, educationally, socially and emotionally.'

Pupils of different abilities make outstanding progress. The use of British Sign Language as the medium for teaching ensures that those pupils whose first language is not English make the same excellent progress as their peers. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. This represents excellent progress from pupils' well below-average starting point on entry. The school has particular strengths in teaching communication skills and the excellent pace of learning in this area ensures that all pupils make outstanding gains in developing their skills. Some excellent teaching of communication was seen in a Nursery/Reception lesson where staff used a very wide range of specialist techniques, such as signing and pictorial systems. This practice is totally consistent in all lessons and is the foundation of the school's success. In all subjects staff plan conscientiously; they are enthusiastic and make learning fun. Teachers and teaching assistants work together extremely well as team. They all have excellent relationships with pupils and give them detailed feedback that helps them to improve their work. Pupils with additional learning difficulties to their hearing impairment receive an excellent level of support and achieve the appropriate small-step learning targets set for them.

Provision for pupils' personal development is a cornerstone of the school's ethos and is excellent for all age groups. All aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. In a school assembly, pupils showed a high degree of reverence and respect towards others and their values. Pupils say that they feel safe and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Through the school council, pupils are closely involved in helping to contribute towards the school community; a good example of this is the way in which older pupils 'buddy' younger ones. Behaviour is excellent based on the consistent use of the behaviour policy by all staff. Pupils gain a good appreciation of issues in the wider world through the 'deaf studies' lessons and all are very willing to express their views on a range of issues. They develop an excellent understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle through the very wide opportunities for physical development and the high take-up of the healthy lunches. This is reflected in the award of Healthy School status. In all their activities pupils pay particular regard to the importance of being safety conscious. At present pupils do not have access to a sufficiently wide range of opportunities to enable them to gain experience in managing their deafness in large group situations. The school and governors have recognised this and it is an important feature in their drive to establish inclusion links with mainstream primary schools.

The curriculum is well tailored to the range and complexity of pupils' needs with a wide range of therapies provided. A strong emphasis on personal and social education and language, literacy and numeracy underpins much of the school's work and this has a significant impact on pupils'

achievements in all areas. The wide range of enrichment activities, such as visits to the theatre, museums, a local sports centre and a farm, adds to pupils' enjoyment of school.

The care, guidance and support pupils receive for their personal and academic development is excellent. There are thorough safety procedures in place and risk assessments fully meet requirements. Staff make sure that all pupils, including those who arrive at times other than the normal starting dates, settle quickly and happily into school life. There is comprehensive tracking of pupils' academic progress that very effectively guides pupils' learning. Parents are partners in their child's education and the school works exceptionally well with them, and with a wide range of outside agencies, to support pupils' development.

Leadership is excellent. The headteacher leads by example and provides the commitment, drive and determination to ensure that all pupils reach their potential. Along with the assistant headteachers, she gives a clear sense of direction. Together they have set a climate of strong teamwork among all adults so that everyone makes an active contribution to school improvement. The governing body is highly active in promoting the school and its aims. It has worked tirelessly to ensure that the quality of provision is such that the school is recognised as a leader in the local, regional and national deaf community. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and, largely because of the rigorous and discerning monitoring of the headteacher and the assistant headteachers, everyone is very clear about what needs to be done for the school to improve further. Staff development and training are given a high profile and staff approach key developments very enthusiastically.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

There are outstanding features in the Early Years Foundation Stage where very high-quality teaching ensures that children make an extremely good start to their school life. The imaginative way in which staff organise children's learning with very close attention to detail means that children are exceptionally well motivated by a wide range of purposeful activities. By the time the children start Year 1, all attain the challenging targets that have been set for them, and the majority exceed these, in most areas of learning, notably in their personal development. Leadership is excellent and the introduction of a more focused programme for teaching letters and sounds is helping to make sure that teaching fully challenges children of all abilities. The recently introduced 0 to 2 provision is an excellent addition. The bilingual nature of the provision where all children use signing has an extremely positive impact on the learning of both the hearing and deaf children in the group. It is much appreciated by parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to experience how to manage their disability in large group situations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The school uses an extremely wide range of assessment tools and information from pupils' previous education to determine their attainment on entry. This information is used extremely well to set challenging targets for pupils' personal and academic development based on National Curriculum or P levels. Recent cohorts have a much wider range of additional needs than in the past and, consequently, overall attainment on entry is now well below average. In national tests

and tasks at age 7 and 11, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with that expected. The school's excellent tracking of pupils' achievements shows that all make excellent progress in all areas.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

All pupils make significant gains in developing self-esteem, confidence and independence because staff value them as individuals and have high expectations of each one. Pupils learn to think through their actions and the effects of these on others. Behaviour is excellent and attendance is good. The overall attendance rate is affected by the medical conditions of some pupils, but the school makes every effort to encourage all to attend regularly. Pupils understand about a wide range of cultures, for instance through visits out of school and through activities linked to events such as Black History Month. They are confident in giving their views because they know their ideas are respected. All make an extremely strong contribution to the wider community through their work with other schools, colleges and universities and also by a wide range of activities with theatre and arts groups. There is excellent development of pupils' communication and basic skills which ensures that all move successfully into the next stage of their education. However, the school realises that for some pupils these transfers could be even easier if they had more opportunities to experience how to manage their deafness in larger group situations before they leave Frank Barnes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. All staff consistently use British Sign Language effectively to teach communication skills and learning is driven forward at great pace. The school's rigorous programme of monitoring of teaching and learning has been highly effective in bringing about improvements in classroom practice since the last inspection. Assessment is vastly improved and staff set finely tuned targets to guide pupils' learning. Teachers and support staff all play a vital role in helping pupils develop the confidence they need to succeed. The excellent relationships established between staff and pupils, and the consistent approach to managing behaviour form the bedrock of pupils' successful learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is carefully planned to provide pupils with the communication skills they need to be successful when they move to the next stage of their education. It takes account of individual needs and ensures that every opportunity is used to enhance pupils' personal development. There is a good range of enrichment activities which play an important part in ensuring that pupils enjoy school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's systems to support and guide pupils' personal development are very effective. A cornerstone of the provision is the excellent pastoral care provided through the 'golden rules' to reward positive behaviour and the house system. The school's comprehensive tracking of each pupil's progress is used effectively to organise extra support for individuals if needed. It

is also used to set challenging targets that increase pupils' determination to succeed. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and the care pupils receive is exemplary. Parents and carers are seen as partners in their child's education and the school works with them very well, and with a wide range of outside agencies, to support pupils' development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher has established an ethos where everyone is continually striving to improve the provision so that pupils get every chance to succeed. Excellent systems for staff development and training ensure that staff are skilled in meeting the wide range of pupils' needs. In turn, this means that pupils' achievements are excellent. Middle leaders have developed their skills well and they take on their responsibilities with enthusiasm. The governing body plays a vital role in raising the profile of deaf pupils at local, regional and national levels and through this, the school promotes community cohesion extremely well. The school and the pupils provide much-needed support to the deaf community through being involved in national research projects. Since the last inspection, senior managers have spent a great deal of time and effort in securing the future of the school within the present local authority reorganisation. During this time, they have ensured that the quality of provision has been improved significantly, showing excellent capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children, London, NW3 3BN

Thank you for helping us when we came visit your school. We particularly enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to so many of you. You told us that Frank Barnes is an excellent school and we totally agree with you. You are particularly impressed with the way in which all staff care for you and help you to gain the skills you need to communicate with each other, your parents and those who are not deaf. This helps you to make excellent progress in your school work so that you are all able to catch up with, and often pass, your hearing peers. Many of you told us how the school helps your parents who are not deaf to be able to communicate with you. You kept telling us how much you enjoy coming to school with lessons that are so exciting and so much fun. I wish that I could come to Frank Barnes every day.

The school council made sure that we were very aware of all the hard work that the staff and the governors have put in on your behalf to make sure that Frank Barnes can move to a new site in a new building. I know you are very pleased that group sizes are small, but I have asked staff to make sure that you get more opportunities to experience how to manage your deafness in large group situations. I hope that this will help you when you leave Frank Barnes and move to your new secondary schools.

Yours faithfully

Stuart Charlton

Lead Inspector