

16 November 2007 Frank Barnes Press Release. Embargo: none

### **Thumbs Up Frank Barnes**

Parents and pupils of Frank Barnes School in Camden have united this week to form an action group 'Thumbs Up Frank Barnes'. The group is campaigning to secure the future of an internationally-acclaimed school for deaf children.

Frank Barnes School is the only signing bilingual and bicultural school for deaf children in London and one of only a few in England. It has earned an international reputation as a centre of excellence for teaching deaf children in British Sign Language (BSL). The school educates deaf children from 16 local boroughs across London, providing them with the tools and confidence for life.

Camden council, has sold the land the school is sited on, for the building of a city academy for hearing pupils, and has ordered the school to move to a new site within 18 months, without first securing an agreement on where the school is to move to.

The deaf pupils face an uncertain future without the specialist provision that has enabled them to grasp the opportunities so readily available to their hearing peers. There is no other school in London that provides the same high quality of sign language teaching, taught by both deaf and hearing role models.

The parents and children involved have already featured in local press and on television, and have launched a website to support the campaign, [www.thumbsup.org.uk](http://www.thumbsup.org.uk).

Polly Burton, a parent, said "Hearing children have a right to an education delivered in a language they can understand, and so do deaf children. Frank Barnes is the only school in London that delivers this to our deaf children. Camden Council must not force Frank Barnes to merge with another school and force our children to be taught in a language they don't understand."

A spokesman for the school explained: "We want Camden Council to support the rebuilding of Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children as a regional centre of excellence to ensure that its sign bilingual expertise and practice in teaching deaf children in their own language continues to serve deaf children across London. Camden's current proposals for a diminished learning experience, delivered by teachers who are not fluent signers, will not help our children to achieve their full potential".

"It is imperative that the Government supports Camden Council to fund this project by either allocating funds from central government or by encouraging the 15 other local authorities to contribute to its rebuilding costs."

**Ends**

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Note to Editors: Independent research carried out at the University of Birmingham has shown the importance of good quality BSL in a deaf child's education and that those that are taught this way do much, much better than their deaf counterparts in mainstream schools, however well they are supported.

The whole curriculum at the Frank Barnes School is delivered in BSL by staff fluent in the language.

In 2001 the school was awarded Beacon Status and since then has achieved two School Achievement Awards, as well as a glowing Ofsted report.

Camden Council has already designated the land, on which Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children is located, for the development of a new Academy. The Parent Action Group believes the current relocation options offer no guarantee for the future of the school and its role as a centre of excellence in deaf education.

**Media coverage:**

25/10/07	Camden New Journal
31/10/07	Camden Gazette
07/11/07	GMTV/ITN news reports throughout the day
09/11/07	BBC See/Hear coverage

**Upcoming events:**

21/11/07	Invited to take part in a march to Camden Town Hall by Unison
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