

Evie – Main School Head Girl 2017 Founder’s Day Speech

Frances Mary Buss was a woman with a mission. She believed that all girls should be entitled to the same educations as boys. She believed this so passionately that she fought for it for all of her working life. She made a huge difference to the way every single one of us lives our lives because she believed so much in what she wanted. To me this epitomises what a Camden girl is: someone who has a cause and is willing to fight for it and not give up, however difficult it proved to be. And a girl, who is there for her friends no matter what life throws at them.

I came to Camden at the end of year seven. My mum went to North London Collegiate, another school Frances Mary Buss founded. And my brother came here for the sixth form. So I knew I would fit in well. Immediately I made friends. Immediately I was accepted as a Camden sister. It amazes me how every girl at this school has something they care about so much. I was so shocked after joining that I was suddenly allowed to have passions and have a space to shout about all my opinions on everything from animal cruelty to Donald Trump to the effect social media has on us.

But to me, for the last year, the thing that I have been most passionate about and willing to fight for is the mental wellbeing of every student. As a head girl team we made it our mission to ensure that every student knew where to go when they needed help.

Whatever form it takes, mental illness is an increasing problem in today’s teenagers. The modern world is a hard place for a teenager. Expectations are so high – from our parents, from our teachers, and from ourselves. But now at Camden, with the help of everyone, there is a space for all students to go when they feel troubled. For example, SOS Club is a space where students can come and talk to a team of girls about their problems. Whether it’s about having too much homework or wanting to talk to someone, my team is here to listen and help. They use their own experiences, resilience and initiative to help others. That is a Camden girl.

One in four of all people will experience a mental health issue within their lifetime. This means that every one of us is going to know someone experiencing a mental health problem at some point. It is something that is prevalent yet there is such a stigma around it. We now have a strong mental health policy for everyone to read and to understand. It also teaches students how to help one another. Not that the Camden girls really need help with that. I am so proud of this policy. I’m so proud of every single one of you that helped make it possible. The school is listening to all of us. Our voices are being heard.

I believe that every one of us should know how to help ourselves or someone else in this situation. Just like we all know how to put a plaster on a cut or that you have to call 999 when someone falls down the stairs, we should all know what to do when someone is sad, obsessive or anxious. But Camden, as usual, is a pioneer of such an important thing. Because Camden cares.

Camden Girls stand by each other. Never ever giving up on each other. Making their friends smile. Making their friends feel not so alone. It is this sisterhood and kindness between students that makes me deeply grateful and intensely proud. It is seeing this that inspires me to believe we can continue to inspire change.

Without Frances Mary Buss I could not be standing here. As a girl, I wouldn't be allowed a voice or a passion. Frances Mary Buss gave us our voices. We need to continue her good work and stand up for other groups that society is ignoring. This year, in the tradition of our founder, we have brought about a positive change. And I know that we as Camden girls will never give up in making things better.