

"The greatest discovery in life is self-discovery. Until you find yourself, you will always be someone else".- Myles Munroe (Professor and leadership consultant)

September 5th 2018 I began my journey to self-discovery, right at the gates of Camden School for Girls. It started with an initial strong sense of fear and disappointment as the school did not look like what the American high school shows had misled me to believe, however, inside I was still excited for what a big school like this could do for a young girl like me with dreams and aspirations that would take all day to recount.

Going from primary to secondary school is one of the most scary yet necessary things all of us need to go through. Coming to Camden was a completely different experience, going from a mixed primary school to an all-girls secondary, felt unreal. It was a completely new routine having so many classes and, being taught by so many teachers felt slightly overwhelming, however like many things it became a routine I slowly adjusted to.

However, for me, the most important thing, making new friends, was difficult; and, for that, I thank the year 7 bonding trip to the activity centre and in particular the seating plan as, though it may have been in alphabetical order, I was extremely lucky. My surname beginning with N I sat next to a girl whose surname began with R, now little did I know that this girl would become my best friend of 7 years so even though we were the youngest in school, especially with our summertime birthdays, we began our CSG journey together and we never felt alone from that point on. Thank you, Grace.

Our friendship, though formed through the seating plan, flourished through our common interests, and we soon joined a few clubs together from the endless options. As we found our footing in the school, growing into the confident girls we now are, we watched alongside as our peers also grew to embrace the value of others and also respect them through our inclusive school ethos.

Coming up to my first Founders Day I was nervous, the most important event of my little year 7 life was approaching, seated in the choir (over there near the band) and singing the song which I ironically share a name with Gloria by Vivaldi, I realised this wasn't so scary rather really interesting and fun, this small tradition which meant not so much to the world outside of the school was so sacredly kept intact and as true to its origin; a fitting tribute to the woman who founded this wonderful school, Frances Mary Buss.

It was on Founder's Day that I first got to hear the school orchestra perform, and have since developed a love for rousing orchestral music, the music which now I currently couldn't imagine life without, as learning the oboe also filled a hole I was unaware I had in my heart, and will now be a skill I will carry forth into the world.

So I thank the music department, as the music you hear here could not be produced at other schools, they just don't have the charm that Camden does.

I was especially struck by the speeches I heard from the prefects on that day, and the way they eloquently expressed their long-standing respect and connection to this school, was quite Inspirational. I hoped to be just like them, I thought to myself, secure of my identity as a Camden girl. Little did I know that after a few years, I would have

the honour of becoming one of these prefects who spoke about the long-lasting impact of attending the school and how I too would genuinely feel that Camden school is the best, and feel honoured and grateful to be a part of it.

At that point I had been in the school for 5 years but now in my 7th and final year of being at Camden I have most fully been able to appreciate what being a Camden girl has made me, as I was able to discover so many aspects of myself and realise how privileged I am as a student of this school for many reasons; this includes the ease of accessing music, how science can be so interesting and fun due to the experiments we do, even if Mr Flynn's jokes don't always make the class laugh, being able to attend masterclasses led by insanely knowledgeable people. As well as being a senior prefect and raising money for charities like centre point through fundraisers like the football tournament between year 12s and 13, I've also debated in a competition run by the English Speaking Union which were all amazing but most of all the event of the year for me is pink day which is not only a spectacular event but one in which we raise lots of money for a breast cancer charity, in keeping with the school's generosity of spirit and awareness of the wider world. These are all privileges and opportunities we take for granted, as they are automatic perks of being a Camden girl, a girl who stands out alone from the crowd.

Staying on in the sixth form made me come out of my sheltered Camden bubble, and realise, that other people came here because they saw opportunities that weren't available to them in their previous schools, things I assumed were a right as we had them so easy here, and how very quickly those who joined in the sixth form from other schools began to also respond to the Camden spell.

Frances Mary Buss, I hope that name rings a bell, she was a girl who once just like you and I had a dream, and her dream turned into this amazing place a school for girls, to have a chance to be educated Ms Buss wanted her school to prepare girls 'for any position in life which they may be called upon to occupy'. Every year for the past 154 years, generations of girls have spent this day celebrating the fact that Ms Buss's dream lives on and becomes a part of history for each and every student at Camden. Because of Ms Buss we are all privileged as students of this school. Because, although times have changed since the beginning of the school being founded back then, the curriculum only broadened to give girls the chance to learn more and more and, ultimately, to be given the same opportunities and privileges of male education.

And so I thank Ms Buss, and her work which has led us all to this room today.

When trying to sum up my Camden experience into 1 word, I felt vibes was the best description - the dictionary definition of vibes is as **a slang term used to describe good feelings. More often than not, "vibes" is used as a noun or verb to describe an emotional impression of a place, event, or person. Overall, if someone's vibing, the energy around them is good, or they're in good company.** I think this quite accurately describes the experience of attending CSG

I also feel grateful and appreciative of all the companions I have had the honour of making across the way as, according to google, experts say that if a friendship lasts more than 7 years it will last a lifetime, so to all my year 7 peers who have experienced this Camden journey with me you're stuck with me whether you like it or not.

And to the school and teaching staff I thank you for I've never felt alone, never felt bored, never felt unnoticed, never felt uncared for and never felt unstimulated rather, from that moment stepping through the gates 7 years ago, I have always felt part of this warm, embracing and inspirational place. At this point I would like to quote that great philosophical thinker Winnie the Pooh when he says "How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard". Thank you Camden school for girls for being this to me.

As I am forever and always in my heart a Camden girl.