

School in cuts battle is top class

■ Lancasterian gains specialist status

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ASCHOOL threatened with savage cuts has won national praise for its high standards.

The Lancasterian school, which teaches 100 disabled youngsters, has been named a specialist communication centre after being recognised for its excellent teaching standards.

But parents are still fighting plans to reduce the number of places at the West Didsbury school to just 40, with the pupils not kept on placed in mainstream schools.

Students have a wide range of disabilities, including cerebral palsy, and find it difficult to make themselves understood.

Education bosses say they will benefit from mixing with able-bodied peers.

But parents believe the Lancasterian is the best place for their children because it offers on-site health services such as physiotherapy.

Nicky Devlin, whose seven-

year-old daughter Mackenzie attends the school, said the new award was further proof of parents' arguments.

She said: "We don't see why the children have to leave a school that does a great job and where the staff really care."

In order to qualify for the special status from the government, staff and parents had to demonstrate their commitment by collecting £20,000.

They struggled to raise the cash before businessman Chris Bellamy read about their plight in the M.E.N.

The 39-year-old internet entrepreneur, who set up firm Firstfound 10 years ago, gave his staff time off for sponsored events and dug into his own pocket to raise £8,000.

The award also brings a £100,000 grant for new equipment and extra money for staff.

Headteacher David Calvert said the money would improve the building and buy gadgets for disabled children to write out their thoughts into a speech machine.

Education bosses are going through a consultation process over the planned cuts and will make a decision in November.



Of course we play
religious music.