



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-909  
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/07638/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM  
Chair Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
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CF99 1NA

SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales

10 December 2019

Dear Janet Finch-Saunders AM,

Thank you for your follow-up letter of 2 December, on behalf of the Petitions Committee, regarding Petition P-05-909 - Promoting the use of Makaton sign language in all Welsh schools.

Our new curriculum will enable all schools to choose to teach languages that are most appropriate to their school, learners and resources. Schools will need to have due regard to the proposed statutory guidance for Languages, Literacy and Communication (LLC) Area of Learning and Experience which will include progression in International Language/s for all learners from primary school until the end of Year 9. The term 'international languages' is being used to enable schools to include not only the modern languages traditionally taught in our schools but also British Sign Language (BSL), community languages or classical Languages. Provision of international languages will not be optional but there will be scope for schools to determine the right provision for their learners.

The statutory guidance will set out what they and local authorities must do to comply with the law and provide further guidance on how to realise the purposes of the curriculum. International Languages are part of the statements of What Matters and therefore at the heart of the Area of Learning and Experience and they encapsulate the key concepts for learning and all of them should be reflected in school-level curricula.

In the current National Curriculum, the only place British Sign Language (BSL) fits is through PSE or the Welsh Baccalaureate. Given BSL is recognised by Welsh Government as a language in its own right, and a medium of education/first language for deaf children, it is crucial that it is reflected in our new curriculum. The LLC Area of Learning and Experience

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

development group, worked alongside special education needs specialists and with support from the National Deaf Children's Society included BSL in its definition of International Languages, allowing schools to choose to teach BSL to their pupils.

The fact that the new curriculum will allow schools and clusters to choose which language(s) are taught, in addition to Welsh and English, is similar to the current curriculum. What is different is the expectation that all learners will learn International Languages at primary school. This offers more equity of provision than the current non-statutory Framework for MFL at KS2 which means that currently some schools offer another language at primary school and others do not.


At the same time, the Welsh Government is introducing a new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system to replace the existing Special Educational Needs (SEN) system in Wales. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 Act will create a unified legislative framework to support learners from 0 to 25 years who have ALN. Its focus is on ensuring that all children and young people who require additional support to access the curriculum, like Makaton, have that support properly planned for and protected.

To support all partners to successfully implement and deliver the new system, we have committed £20m for the ALN Transformation Programme over the course of this Assembly. A significant proportion of this funding will be used to support activity to upskill the workforce to better meet the needs of learners with ALN. Work is currently underway to develop a professional learning offer for teachers that will support them in being able to meet the needs of all of their learners. Alongside a professional learning offer for all teachers we are developing a specific professional learning offer for Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCos) who will provide a strategic leadership role and be the first port of call for professional advice and guidance.

With regard to your second point, concerning support given by the Government to provide other opportunities to learn Makaton, the focus of Welsh Government support within adult learning is on the provision of British Sign Language (BSL). In order to gain a clearer understanding of the availability and demand for BSL for adults in Wales, I recently commissioned the People and Work Unit to review the provision delivered by the post 16 sector. This review is now complete and the report will be published shortly. Following publication, I will determine what next steps will be taken to develop our policy around the provision of BSL for adults in Wales.

I hope that the content of this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

**Kirsty Williams AC/AM**  
Y Gweinidog Addysg  
Minister for Education