

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-909
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/07214/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
Assembly Member for Aberconwy
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8 October 2019

Dear Janet

Thank you for your letter of 27 September, on behalf of the Petitions Committee, regarding Petition P-05-909 - Promoting the use of Makaton sign language in all Welsh schools - which has been instigated by Isabella Evans.

Thank you for the opportunity to consider the points that Isabella has raised on a matter which she feels very passionately about. I want to be clear that I want every pupil to be able to enjoy their education, to be ambitious and to succeed in whatever they choose to do.

We are developing a new curriculum for Wales and this will include Welsh, English and International languages from primary school. 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.

The practitioners developing the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience include teachers from special schools. The group has also engaged with the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS). We recognise that Makaton is a great way to develop communication it is not, however, recognised as a language in its own right by Welsh Government, unlike BSL which has been recognised since January 2004.

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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.

It is, however, neither the intention nor the aim of the Languages Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience to limit the choice of languages offered to a single language. Such a limitation would run contrary to the ethos of the new curriculum, which seeks to support and broaden, rather than narrow, language learning and language diversity in the curriculum. There would be nothing stopping schools from teaching/using Makaton but that would be in addition to Welsh, English and at least one international language by the end of primary.

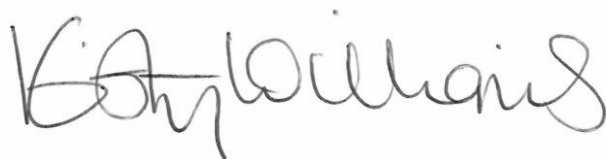
Within the current school curriculum, schools can explore additional subject areas, such as sign language, through Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons and through teaching of the Welsh Baccalaureate. We have materials on our learning platform Hwb, which specifically support the teaching of Makaton which all schools in Wales can access. We also provide direct funding to the four Regional Education Consortia, on an annual basis, and they determine how they can best support the schools in their region with this funding. They will be aware if there is any use or demand of Makaton in their areas and will provide support accordingly.

Individual schools decide the procedures they adopt for meeting the needs of all learners, for observing and assessing their progress, and for deciding the nature of any Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision they put in place. For example, if a child or young person was identified as requiring support with communication to enable them to access a suitable education, the school and local authority would be responsible for arranging this.

The Welsh Government is introducing a new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system to replace the existing SEN system in Wales. To support the successful implementation and delivery of the new ALN system, we have committed a £20 million package of investment for the ALN transformation programme. A significant proportion of this funding will be used to support activity to develop the skills of the education workforce to ensure that practitioners will be able to effectively operate the new system and improve outcomes for learners with ALN.

I hope that the content of this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

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