

**P-05-909 Promoting the use of Makaton sign language in all Welsh schools,
Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 13.11.19**

Dear Sir/Madam,

In response to the email which asked for thoughts regarding the document, letter to the Committee Chair Janet Finch-Saunders AM from Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education.

Isabella feels the thoughts of the Kirsty Williams are very encouraging in supporting Isabella's endeavours in achieving Sign taught in all schools in Wales.

Isabella just wanted this opportunity to state that she is passionate about Sign in general being taught in schools in Wales, whether it be BSL, Makaton, Sign Along. The Sign taught wouldn't necessarily have to be every day but even once a week would have a significant positive impact on pupils. Isabella believes that in order to get the best possible start in education and in developing social skills Sign plays a very important role. Kirsty Williams made a very important point in her letter to the Petitions Committee stating that Makaton isn't recognised as a language by the Welsh Assembly but BSL is recognised as a language. This is because Makaton is a communication tool not a Sign language derived from BSL used because it is a simplified form of BSL and used in many instances as a spring board to eventually move to the more intricate language of BSL.

Another point Isabella is quite keen to raise is the importance of Sign in pre speech children and their development in speech. Isabella having a brother with Down Syndrome who is non verbal has seen firsthand the importance of Sign in the development of his speech which is slowly developing as she believes much from the use of Sign. In many cases slow speech development could be attributed to poor social development from the home in some children.

In the age we currently live in inclusion has come a long way in a positive way and including Sign in all schools in Wales would only reinforce this.

The last point Isabella wanted to make is support for other languages being taught. There are studies which support the view that if Sign is taught alongside another language, for instance Welsh it actually promotes the learning of the two being taught side by side. A study which supports this principle is :- Read, A. (2014) Makaton and MFL case study. Manchester Communication Academy.

Another study which maybe useful when discussions take place, these are :-

- Sheehy, K. Duffy, H. (2009)

Attitudes to Makaton in the ages of integration and inclusion. International Journal of Special Education.

Thank you for the opportunity for allowing Isabella to have a voice during this stage of the Petition procedure and we will be very much looking forward to follow the petition on the rest of its journey.

Kindest regards,

Dominic, Kellie and Isabella Evans.