

**P-05-909 Promoting the use of Makaton sign language in all Welsh schools,
Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 15.01.20**

Dear Petitions Committee,

I'd like to start by thanking you for your correspondence and giving Isabella the opportunity to input her opinions on the petition she raised as it goes through the debating process.

Kellie, Isabella's mother and myself have discussed the petition up to this stage at some length with Isabella to get her thoughts on the progression of her petition. Having read the letter submitted to Janet Finch Saunders A.M. Chair of the Committee from Kirsty Williams, Minister For Education we have some opinions to give. We are aware that it's hard to accommodate everyone all scenarios as far as education goes but we do believe that it is important for all children to have the opportunity to learn a form of Sign language not just if the school decides to choose the option of BSL as a second language in the LCC programme. Although it's important to progress all pupils in international languages especially in the age we live in, it has been shown in many studies that Sign language taught alongside another international language promotes the learning of the two. This could literally be one sign each day at registration time for instance, if this was started from the time a child starts to the they finish they would have a good vocabulary in Sign.

Going back to the letter from Kirsty Williams where it discusses the ALN system which supports learners with additional needs 0-25 to access for example Makaton which is supported with a £20 million investment. This is excellent news being the case that Isabella has two disabled brothers who both use Makaton and Sign in general which is the reason Isabella taught herself Makaton in the first place, became so passionate about promoting it and decided to Petition for change. However Isabella has found this disappointing in the sense that although these learners with additional needs will benefit from being able to learn Makaton for instance it will be a bit lost because these learners can only communicate with other people who also know Makaton. If Sign in general was taught to all learners, everyone could communicate with one another, hence, a lot more inclusion within society.

Isabella knows this is a big ask and already what we are seeing from the petition being debated in very encouraging and a big step in the right direction.

Thank you for your time and allowing Isabella's thoughts to be heard and we look forward to following the petition as it progresses.

Kindest regards Dominic Evans (Isabella's Father).