



**Craig Whittaker MP**

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**Campaign to Allow British Sign Language to be Taught as a GCSE**

Thank you for contacting me about the proposal to put British Sign Language (BSL) onto the school curriculum.

BSL is incredibly important, and I read about this proposal with a great deal of interest. I know that thought has previously been given to including BSL within the modern foreign language group of subjects in the national curriculum, but, unfortunately, it was found that this was not possible due to certain requirements that needed to be met. For example, at key stage two, pupils are required to describe people, places, things and actions in writing, and at key stage three start writing prose in the target language. Obviously this would not be possible with BSL.

This does not mean, however, that BSL cannot be a rigorous and challenging subject which schools might choose to teach in addition to foreign languages. The Department for Education has previously supported schools that choose to teach it by funding projects such as I-Sign, which aimed to improve the skills and qualifications of support workers in schools who help pupils using sign language.

As more schools become academies, fewer will remain dependent on the national curriculum. In academies, teachers will have the freedom to use their experience and skills to design their own programmes. This will allow them to innovate beyond the academic core set out in the curriculum.

I am also encouraged that, for the first time, BSL will be accepted as a qualification in English for apprentices where BSL is their first language. This further underlines how barriers are being broken down to ensure people who use BSL can obtain the skills they need.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP