

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

17th May 2018

New Contract,

RE: BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE GCSE.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of British Sign Language (BSL) as a GCSE.

BSL is a vital method of communication for many people and the first or preferred language for an estimated 70,000 deaf people across the country. I know that colleagues in the Department for Education are committed to the education of young people with special educational needs or disability, including those with a hearing impairment.

I am encouraged that schools may choose to offer BSL as part of their wider school curriculum, and can offer accredited BSL qualifications. I also welcome the fact that BSL is now an alternative to a level 1 and level 2 qualification in English, when undertaking an apprenticeship. This enables those who use BSL to complete their apprenticeship without having to achieve another English qualification.

I have been assured by colleagues in the Department for Education that the Government does not object in principle to the development of a GCSE in BSL. However, I know that schools have asked for a period of stability to provide them with a chance to embed the extensive reforms to GCSEs and A levels. For this reason, the Secretary of State has committed to making no further reforms to GCSEs or A levels in this Parliament.

Nevertheless, I understand that the Department for Education has indicated to Signature, the awarding organisation proposing to develop the GCSE, that it is open to considering a proposal for a new GCSE. The development of new qualifications is a lengthy process which is likely to take several years, but I remain confident that any proposals will be considered very carefully and I will continue to follow this matter with great interest.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

Tom

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
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CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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