

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

24th September 2020

Jean Confortant,

RE: SENSE SIGN SCHOOL.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of teaching sign language in schools.

Notwithstanding the fact that as a Government Minister I am unable to sign EDMs, in any event, I have general concerns about the effectiveness and expense of the EDM system, and I think it is much more effective to raise concerns directly with Ministers, both verbally, and in writing, rather than signing EDMs, and so I must politely decline your request. With that in mind, I have spoken to Ministers directly about your concerns.

Every child should get the education that is right for them. I know that Ministers are committed to this goal, and are supporting the education of all children and young people with special educational needs or a disability, including those with a hearing impairment.

I am pleased that schools can choose to offer sign language in their curriculum, or include it as part of their extra-curricular activities programme. This includes offering existing British Sign Language (BSL) qualifications. I understand that the Department for Education is also working with subject experts and Ofqual on introducing a BSL GCSE, which is welcome too.

Beyond the school setting, the Government provides funding for adult learners aged 19 and over to undertake BSL qualifications through the adult education budget, up to and including Level 2.

BSL forms part of the local flexibility offer (non-statutory) and qualifications are either fully funded (if the learner is unemployed or participating in the low wage trial), or co-funded depending on the age, prior achievement and employment status of the learner. BSL qualifications at Level 3 and above can be funded through an Advanced Learner Loan.

In addition, the Government has funded the development of a family sign language programme, known as the 'I-sign programme', which is freely available at the National Deaf Children's Society's family sign language website.

I welcome these measures as helping children and young people learn BSL is a chance to break down barriers, build understanding, and for children and young people to make new friends.

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 PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

LISTENING TO YOU - CAMPAIGNING FOR YOU
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