

Extracts relating to deaf learners from the research document:

## **Modern Languages in Special Schools and Mainstream Units in Scotland 2002** (SOEID)

### **Programmes offered in special schools/units catering mainly for deaf pupils** (p.27)

The two schools for the deaf in the sample offer programmes in British Sign Language (BSL) to pupils at all levels, leading to qualifications awarded by the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP), there being no Scottish National Qualification in BSL. [at this date]. These programmes are taught by BSL specialists, in one school by a deaf tutor. In addition to BSL, pupils in one school gain some awareness of other sign languages; their programme includes an element of Deaf Studies, including deaf culture and history.

### **Comment** (p 29)

Although it seems sensible to ensure that pupils who have a significant hearing impairment have opportunities to become competent users of BSL, the consequent omission of provision for foreign language learning might be seen as discriminatory. Deaf people can and do learn foreign languages and Access ML provision allows for such needs to be catered for. Schools for the Deaf might wish to consider if they are in a position to give a lead to mainstream units by showing how ML programmes can be made accessible to pupils who have significant hearing loss.

### **Reasons for non-provision** (p.34}

Another school, for pupils with hearing impairment, felt that although one pupil with excellent English language skills was able to tackle French on the same basis as the other pupils in the mainstream class

*...for the others – most of whom have BSL as their first language – English is really their first foreign language. In addition they do deaf studies, an integral part of which is BSL. The decision about who does a modern language is based on a pupil's language skills and not on support issues (School 63).*

### **Hearing impairment** (p35)

Pupils in the base that specialised in provision for deaf pupils considered BSL and English together made up their pupils' language entitlement, although 1 pupil was also following a course in French.

*The one pupil who is in the French class has excellent English and this enables him to tackle French on the same basis as the hearing pupils. For the others – most of whom have BSL as their first language – English is really **their** modern foreign language. In addition they do Deaf Studies, an integral part of which is BSL (School 63).*

In another school, however, a pupil with severe hearing loss attending a mainstream French class 'finds the speaking content difficult'. In the same school, (School 133) a group of S5 students in the HI Unit worked with a interactive CD programme. "Lingua Surda".

... *This was a special French programme which included both English and French Sign Languages.*

### **Comment (p45)**

As in the special schools for pupils with hearing impairments, BSL tends to be offered as an alternative to foreign language learning. It might be interesting to gather views on this from members of the Deaf Community, particularly from those who have themselves learned a foreign language. It would also be interesting to know if opportunities to learn BSL are available to hearing pupils in those schools, both to facilitate the social inclusion of pupils with hearing impairments and because there is an acute shortage of English/BSL interpreters in Scotland.

### **Conclusion and comments (p49)**

In the case of BSL, we would like to have known if the language was on offer to hearing as well as to hearing impaired pupils, but we had not anticipated this response and had not asked the question. It seems to us that, for social as well as educational reasons, any language offered should be offered to all pupils equally. It would also be interesting to know if the Deaf community is happy with a policy which offers BSL but not other languages to children with a hearing impairment, but the question is outwith the scope of this study.

NOTE The complete document can be downloaded here:

[http://www.strath.ac.uk/media/faculties/hass/scilt/publications/SCILT\\_2002\\_McColl\\_MLPSinSpecialSchools.pdf](http://www.strath.ac.uk/media/faculties/hass/scilt/publications/SCILT_2002_McColl_MLPSinSpecialSchools.pdf)

These extracts can be downloaded here:

<http://www.languageswithoutlimits.co.uk/deafness.html>