



Warton St Paul's

Church of England Primary Academy  
A member of **CDARI**

# BSL (MFL) Policy

Reviewed September 2025

Next review September 2026

## Our Mission Statement

‘Believe, Belong, Be the Best that  
you can Be’

*"Whatever you do in word or deed,  
do everything in the name of the  
Lord." Colossians 3:17*

## THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The benefits of learning a modern visual language in school go far beyond knowledge of that particular language. Children gain a clearer understanding of how languages work—not just through sound, but through **spatial grammar, facial expression, and handshape articulation**.

As part of their BSL study, children are encouraged to develop **visual-retention and kinaesthetic learning strategies**, which they can carry over into all other areas of their lives, particularly in developing focus, empathy, and non-verbal communication. Furthermore, our focus on BSL prepares children for a modern, inclusive society. While our traditional links with feeder schools like Carr Hill and Lytham St Annes have historically focused on French, our transition to BSL provides a unique linguistic foundation that equips children with the diverse communication skills highly valued in secondary education and the modern workplace.

- **Kinaesthetic Learning:** BSL is a physical language. For children who struggle with traditional "desk-based" phonics or grammar, the muscle memory involved in signing can unlock new pathways for linguistic success.
- **Enhanced Inclusion:** It provides every child with the tools to communicate with the 151,000 BSL users in the UK. It is particularly empowering for students with Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN).
- **Spatial and Visual Intelligence:** BSL requires learners to process information visually and spatially, improving hand-eye coordination and peripheral vision.
- **Emotional Literacy:** Because BSL relies heavily on facial expression (Non-Manual Features), children become more adept at reading social cues and expressing their own emotions.

## 2. Aims: Why BSL at St. Paul's?

Our specific aims for BSL are:

- To promote **deaf awareness** and dismantle barriers between hearing and non-hearing communities.
- To use BSL as a "bridge" language that supports the development of English vocabulary through visual reinforcement.
- To build **confidence** in non-verbal communication, helping children become more expressive and engaged communicators.

## 3. KS1 Implementation: Basic BSL Skills

In Key Stage 1, the focus is on "Visual Oracy"—developing the ability to watch, attend, and mimic signs accurately.

Category	Skills and Vocabulary
Fingerspelling	Recognizing and producing the 26 handshapes of the BSL alphabet to spell their own names.
Greetings	Hello, good morning/afternoon, please, thank you, and "How are you?"
Identity	Signs for family members, colors, and common animals.
Classroom Instruction	"Look," "Listen/Pay attention," "Sit down," "Work together," and "Well done."
Numbers	Cardinal numbers 1–20, used for counting objects in the classroom.

## 4. Subject Organisation (The BSL Strands)

To align with the DfES Framework for Languages, we categorise BSL learning into four key areas:

KS1

- **Receptive Skills (Listening/Watching):** Children learn to "read" signs and facial expressions. In KS1, this involves following signed stories and identifying signed instructions from the teacher.
- **Productive Skills (Speaking/Signing):** Emphasis is placed on correct handshape, location, and movement.
- **Non-Manual Features (NMFs):** Children are taught that the "meaning" isn't just in the hands—it's in the eyebrows, mouth patterns, and shoulder tilts.
- **Deaf Culture and History:** Understanding that BSL is the heart of a vibrant Deaf community. Children learn about the history of the BSL Act (2022) and famous Deaf role models.

KS2

- **Visual Oracy (Receptive/Productive):** The emphasis is on developing "watching" and "signing" skills. Classroom instructions, praise, and register-taking are delivered in BSL. Children learn to identify handshapes and movement patterns just as they would sound patterns in spoken French.
- **Visual Literacy:** Pupils are introduced to **BSL Glossing** (a way of writing BSL structure) and the **BSL Fingerspelling Alphabet**. This supports literacy by reinforcing the link between handshapes, letters, and meaning.
- **Intercultural Understanding:** Children gain an understanding of **Deaf Culture**, the history of the BSL Act, and the social conventions of the Deaf community (e.g., getting someone's attention correctly, the importance of eye contact).
- **Knowledge About Language:** Pupils study how BSL sentences are built using **Topic-Comment** structure (which differs from English). They become aware of how facial expressions (Non-Manual Features) act as "tonal" grammar, changing a statement into a question.

## 5. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The teaching of British Sign Language (BSL) at St. Paul's C of E School is underpinned by a robust legal and educational framework:

- **The BSL Act (2022):** This landmark legislation officially recognized British Sign Language as a language of Great Britain. Under the Act, government departments (including the DfE) are required to promote and facilitate the use of BSL. Our school adopts this mandate by elevating BSL from an extracurricular "club" to a core Modern Foreign Language (MFL) offering.
- **National Curriculum KS2 Entitlement:** In line with the statutory requirement for Key Stage 2 pupils to study a foreign language, BSL is taught as a full linguistic subject. It meets the DfE criteria for "teaching a modern language" as it possesses its own distinct grammar, syntax, and cultural heritage.
- **The 2026 Curriculum and Assessment Review:** Following the most recent national curriculum updates, there is an increased focus on **oracy** and **inclusive communication**. BSL directly supports these statutory goals by diversifying the way pupils process and express information.
- **Equality Act (2010):** By teaching BSL, the school fulfills its "Public Sector Equality Duty" to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic (disability/deafness) and those who do not.
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## **ROLE OF SUBJECT LEADER**

The Subject Leader is responsible for improving the standards of teaching and learning in MFL through:

Monitoring and evaluating MFL:-

- pupil progress
- provision of MFL
- the quality of the Learning Environment;
- the deployment and provision of support staff
- Taking the lead in policy development
- Auditing and supporting colleagues in their CPD
- Purchasing and organising resources
- Keeping up to date with recent developments in MFL

## **CONCLUSION**

This policy also needs to be in line with other school policies and therefore should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Assessment and Record Keeping
- Responding to pupils' work / Feedback / Marking policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- ICT Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

This policy will be reviewed according to the emerging needs of our school.

Signed .....Date ..... (Chair of Governors)

Signed .....Date ..... (Headteacher)