

**Senedd Cymru**

**Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol**

**Ymchwiliad:** Bil Iaith Arwyddion Prydain (Cymru)

**Ymateb gan:** Cymdeithas Dehonglwyr Iaith Arwyddion

**Welsh Parliament**

**Equality and Social Justice Committee**

**Inquiry:** British Sign Language (Wales) Bill

**Evidence from:** Association of Sign Language  
Interpreters



## **Written Evidence from ASCL Cymru to the Equality and Social Justice Committee British Sign Language (Wales) Bill – Stage 1 Scrutiny**

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Equality and Social Justice Committee's Stage 1 scrutiny of the general principles of the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill.
2. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) is a trade union and professional association representing 25,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice- principals, assistant heads, business leaders and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million children and young people across primary, secondary, post-16 and specialist education. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
3. Our response is based on the views of our members, obtained through consultation with ASCL Cymru Council, and prompted and unprompted emails and messages.
4. ASCL Cymru is committed to supporting inclusive education and ensuring that every learner can thrive, regardless of their background or means of communication.

### **General Principles and the Need for Legislation**

5. We broadly support the general principles of the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill and recognise the importance of formal legislation to strengthen the status of British Sign Language (BSL) in Wales. We welcome the ambition to promote and facilitate the use of BSL and believe this will contribute positively to the inclusion and educational experience of Deaf learners.

### **Key Provisions**

#### **6. Duty on Welsh Ministers to Promote and Facilitate BSL**

We support this duty as a key step in embedding BSL into Welsh public life. This national

leadership is essential in setting a positive tone and expectation across all sectors, including education.

#### **7. National BSL Strategy**

A well-designed strategy has the potential to provide direction and consistency in this area. It is vital that this strategy is co-produced with members of the deaf community, school leaders, representatives of the education workforce, trade unions and other stakeholders to ensure it is practical and effective in supporting learners and staff in schools and colleges.

#### **8. Guidance and BSL Plans by Public Bodies**

Clear and practical guidance would be essential for schools, colleges, and local authorities. Any BSL-related plans must be adequately resourced and supported with training, appropriate staffing, including BSL interpreters, and specialist input to ensure desired impact, and consistent approaches, especially in mainstream education settings.

#### **9. Appointment of a BSL Adviser**

We welcome the appointment of a BSL Adviser. The person appointed to this role must have strong links with both the deaf community and the education sector in Wales, to support joined-up policy and provision.

#### **10. Reporting Duties**

ASCL Cymru agrees that regular reporting will support transparency and accountability. However, reporting mechanisms should not increase workload or add unnecessary administrative burden on schools and colleges. Any data collection should be streamlined with existing systems wherever possible.

### **Additional Considerations**

#### **11. Barriers to Implementation**

The availability of qualified BSL professionals, including interpreters and teachers of the deaf, is currently limited. Without a clear plan to expand and support this workforce, implementation of any strategy will be constrained. Additionally, time and capacity pressures in schools and colleges must be considered. This includes the recruitment and retention crisis, excess workload, the volume of reform currently being implemented and inadequate funding faced by schools.

#### **12. Ministerial Powers and Subordinate Legislation**

ASCL Cymru believes the delegated powers proposed for Welsh Ministers are appropriate, provided there is ongoing engagement with the education sector and sufficient time allowed for implementation of any new duties and responsibilities on schools and the workforce.

#### **13. Unintended Consequences**

There is a risk that schools and colleges may feel pressure to comply without adequate training or resources, which could lead to superficial implementation. To avoid this, strong support structures and clarity of expectations will be needed. This would include

a national approach high quality professional learning to ensure consistency across Wales.

14. As already mentioned, there is a risk that implementation of strategies to further develop BSL provision in schools may place more pressure on school leaders and other education workers. This may include increased workload and may impact upon strategies to reduce its volume.


**15. Financial Implications**

There will inevitably be cost implications, particularly relating to staff development, recruitment of specialist staff, and production of accessible materials. It is essential that additional funding that is sufficient to implement any new statutory duties placed on schools and colleges is provided and sustained within the education budget.

**Conclusion**

16. ASCL Cymru supports the general principles of the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill and recognises the importance of advancing linguistic rights and inclusion for deaf learners. We encourage the Welsh Government to work closely with the education sector to ensure that any new duties are realistic, well-supported, and appropriately funded to ensure long-term success.

We would be happy to provide any additional information as the Bill progresses.

  
*ASCL Cymru Education Policy Officer*  
*September 2025*