



Self Assessment of our SEND Implementation

January 19

*A new approach to special educational
needs and disability*



Hearing Impairment Team - Sign Language Classes

What was the issue?

Support for families of deaf children who use sign language has been limited in the Torbay area. There are very few families with children who need access to sign language and sign language classes are not offered in Torquay. Parents have to travel to Newton Abbot or Exeter to get access to sign language classes. No systems in place for bringing families together for mutual support.

Our journey so far....

We spoke to families of deaf children whose children use sign language to ascertain skills and needs in supporting their children. Families wanted local access to sign language classes and wanted a forum to share experiences with each other.

We also spoke to St. Margaret's Academy, who had a BSL using child in their school. They wanted some sign language input for staff so that they could sign at a basic level.

What have we done?

Since September 2017, we have offered weekly British Sign Language (BSL) classes to parents at St. Margaret's Academy, Torquay. These classes were initially a forum to bring parents together to learn family sign language and share experiences and ideas but has since developed into offering Level 2 BSL for parents. This focus on examinations has increased the ability of parents' conversational skills and broadened their vocabulary in BSL in everyday topics.

Since April 2018 we have offered weekly BSL classes (Level 1) to staff at St. Margaret's Academy. The purpose of the classes is to pass the BSL 1 exam.

What difference has this made?

Parents in the Bay now have access to local lessons in BSL and are developing the language to a higher level in their homes with their children. There is an increase in confidence in the ability to use BSL both with parents and staff at St. Margaret's Academy in the conversational form of BSL. This will provide the basis for developing English proficiency in reading and writing for the children.



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Because quite a number of staff at St. Margaret's Academy can now use BSL to a proficient standard and can engage in simple conversation, the children that use BSL in the school can have conversations with a broader range of adults instead of only the Deaf Inclusion Workers and Teacher of the Deaf in the school. This has the effect of normalising BSL within the school and reducing disability because many staff can use and understand BSL.

Areas for further action

We have started to create opportunities for deaf sign language users in the Bay to meet up with other BSL users in Devon, for example Plymouth and Exeter. This will have the effect of broadening friendships with peers who use the same method of communication and will also serve to strengthen the development of Deaf identities and promote positive mental health in these children.

Immediate next steps

Continue the work of fostering the creation of social networks for deaf children who use BSL in the Torquay area with other BSL users in Devon.

Author

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