Sign languages and sign systems

Sign languages are used by the deaf community. They have their own grammar and word order. In the UK, we use British Sign Language (BSL) but other countries have their own sign languages, for example American Sign Language (ASL) and Auslan in Australia.

Sign systems borrow signs from sign languages. They use the grammar and word order of the spoken language.

Sign languages

British Sign Language (BSL)

What is BSL?
BSL is an indigenous minority language and the first language of many deaf people in Wales. It is included in Curriculum for Wales in the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience alongside Welsh, English and other languages. Curriculum for Wales BSL guidance supports progression in BSL for deaf BSL users as well as allowing schools to introduce BSL as a second, third or subsequent language.

Who is BSL for?
Anyone can learn BSL including children with additional learning needs (ALN). People who have used sign systems can go on to learn BSL.

How can BSL support progression in learning?
BSL is a medium of learning for deaf BSL users. Progression in BSL is expressed in the BSL descriptions of learning in Curriculum for Wales.

Sign systems

Makaton

What is Makaton?
Makaton is a communication programme which uses signs, speech and symbols.

Who is Makaton for?
Makaton can help people with communication needs. It is most often used with young children and people with additional learning needs (ALN).

How can Makaton support progression in learning?
Makaton can support progression in English and/or Welsh.

Signalong

What is Signalong?
Signalong is a key word sign-supported communication system which uses spoken word order.

Who is Signalong for?
Signalong can help people with communication needs. It is often used with young children and people with additional learning needs (ALN).

How can Signalong support progression in learning?
Signalong can support progression in English and/or Welsh.

Sign supported English (SSE)/Sign supported Welsh (SSW)

What is SSE/SSW?
SSE/SSW uses signs borrowed from BSL but follows spoken word order.

Who is SSE/SSW for?
SSE/SSW is used to support spoken English or Welsh. It's most commonly used in education.

How can SSE/SSW support progression in learning?
SSE/SSW can support progression in Welsh/English.