



Chase Side Primary School

Modern Languages

Policy:

British Sign Language

**Reviewed and Adopted by Governors on 19th
November 2025**

Review Date: November 2028

As for all policies we undertake within our school, all aspects of the modern Languages Policy must fit with the ethos, values and vision for the school which are:

Our Ethos:

Our ethos encompasses being welcoming, inclusive, friendly, caring and ensuring that working together underpins everything we do.

Everyone has the right to expect and benefit from this ethos and these values are demonstrated in all aspects of school life. Everyone who is part of or who visits our learning community is asked to adhere to our values and ethos.

Our Vision:

- Developing confident lifelong learners
- Embracing and valuing our diversity
- Making a positive impact in our community

Our Values:

The shared values of our school include:

- Kindness
- Respect
- Friendship
- Honesty
- Resilience

Stronger Together!

Introduction

In line with the statutory requirement to teach a modern or ancient language from age 7 (Key Stage 2) and reflecting the school's decision to adopt British Sign Language (BSL) as the primary language taught, this policy outlines the curriculum intent, implementation, and progression for BSL at Chase Side Primary. This approach is informed by OFSTED's Research Review Series: Languages, recognising the unique challenges and opportunities presented by teaching BSL to hearing children.

What is British Sign Language (BSL)?

- BSL is a visual language using gestures, facial expressions, and body language, primarily used by Deaf people and those with hearing loss in the UK.
- It has its own grammatical structure and syntax, independent of English.
- BSL was officially recognised as a language by the British Government in 2003, with further recognition in 2022 affirming its status equal to other languages.
- Approximately 150,000 Deaf people in the UK use BSL, with 70,000 for whom it is their preferred means of communication. The wider community, including families and colleagues, also use BSL.
- BSL is increasingly relevant due to an ageing population and the prevalence of hearing loss affecting over 10 million people in the UK, over 800,000 of whom are severely or profoundly deaf.

Why is a BSL Curriculum Different?

- Unlike modern foreign languages (MFL) which include spoken, written, and reading components, BSL is purely visual with no written form.
- Similar elements include conversational skills, questioning, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary acquisition.
- Teaching BSL to hearing children requires adapted approaches recognising the visual and kinaesthetic nature of the language.
- The curriculum focuses on enabling pupils to communicate effectively in everyday situations and prepares them for formal qualifications such as the Youth Level 1 BSL qualification.

Benefits of Teaching BSL in Mainstream Schools

- Promotes inclusion and supports communication for all pupils.
- Supports children with barriers to learning, including SEN pupils, by providing visual and direct communication methods.
- Enables EAL pupils to access communication through visual language, offering a level playing field as all pupils start learning BSL together.
- Provides an alternative communication mode for pupils with speech and communication difficulties.
- Enhances cultural awareness and understanding of Deaf communities and diversity.
- Prepares pupils for a society where BSL is increasingly recognised and valued.

Aims of Learning BSL

Learners will be able to:

- Understand and use a limited range of simple words and sentences in BSL.
- Take part in simple, everyday conversations using BSL.
- Give and follow simple directions or instructions.
- Give and follow familiar statements or descriptions.
- Develop basic sign language skills to communicate with Deaf people, whether family, friends, or colleagues.
- Build foundations for further BSL learning and communication skills.

Curriculum Intent

- To provide a broad, balanced, and progressive BSL curriculum that supports vocabulary acquisition, communication skills, and cultural understanding.
- To accommodate individual differences in aptitude and learning pace, ensuring all pupils have the opportunity to succeed and feel motivated.
- To foster pupils' confidence and competence in BSL, enabling them to use the language effectively in a variety of contexts.
- To prepare pupils for a Youth Level 1 BSL qualification by the end of Key Stage 2, supporting substantial progress in one language as required by the national curriculum.

Curriculum Implementation

- Pupils from Reception to Year 6 (with a pilot year starting in Year 3) receive weekly 30-minute BSL lessons.
- Teaching approaches are adapted to the visual and kinaesthetic nature of BSL, including use of signing, facial expressions, and body language.
- Lessons focus on practical vocabulary acquisition, basic grammar, and communicative skills, progressing from novice to more confident users.
- Teachers receive ongoing professional development to build subject knowledge and effective teaching strategies for BSL.
- Resources and in future assessment tools are aligned with the Youth Level 1 BSL qualification standards to ensure clear progression pathways.

Progression Framework

- Progression is based primarily on vocabulary acquisition and the ability to comprehend and produce signs and phrases.
- Initially, pupils develop recognition and production of basic signs, simple sentences, and receptive skills.
- Pupils learn to use longer pieces of language clearly and meaningfully, using vocabulary and grammar they know well
- Progress is monitored through formative assessments and practical demonstrations of signing skills, preparing pupils to meet Youth Level 1 qualification standards at the end of Key Stage 2.

Inclusion and Engagement

- The curriculum is designed to be inclusive, supporting pupils with diverse learning needs and abilities.
- Special attention is given to motivating pupils who may find language learning challenging, ensuring they experience success and clear next steps.
- The school promotes positive attitudes towards BSL and Deaf culture, enhancing pupil engagement and cultural competence.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The effectiveness of the BSL curriculum is regularly reviewed through lesson observations, pupil feedback, and assessment outcomes.
- Senior leaders monitor curriculum implementation and progression to ensure alignment with policy aims and OFSTED expectations.
- Professional development needs are identified and addressed to maintain high-quality teaching.

Medium Term Planning – Pilot year

Autumn Term				
Year group	Topic	Content	Skill as outlined above	New vocabulary signs
Reception (from 1/9/26)	Greetings Finger spelling Names Colours Emotions School signs	Visual resources, copying of interaction with everyday actions	Turn taking, eye contact, questions and answers, Handshape, facial expression, body language	Hello, how are you, sign name, finger spell name, I'm well thank you. Please, sorry, excuse me, again please, happy, sad, excited, hungry, tired, red, blue, yellow, green, orange, purple, black, white, head teacher, teachers, caretaker, school office, staff, children, car, bus, walking, bike, scooter
Year 1 and 2 (from 1/9/26)	Transport	Visual resources, pair work, group work	Turn taking, eye contact, questions and answers, handshape, facial expression, body language	As above and Not well, ill, time off Not so good, fantastic, brilliant, visitors, people, lady, man, aeroplane, boat, motorbike
Year 3 and 4		Visual resources, pair work, group work, children demonstrate what they have learnt.	Turn taking, eye contact, questions and answers, handshape, facial expression, body language, Spatial awareness	As above and: Can I help? I am learning to sign, who do you want to meet?
Year 5 and 6		Visual resources, pair work, group work, children demonstrate what they have learnt by asking questions and answering.	As above including role shift, Practical scenarios, their real-life experiences.	As above with addition mock scenarios

Spring Term

Year group	Topic	Content	Skill as outlined above	New vocabulary signs
Reception (from 1/9/26)	Seasons Food Clothing Families Transport Direction	Visual resources, copying of interaction with everyday actions	Turn taking, eye contact, questions and answers, Handshape, facial expression, body language	Autumn, winter, spring, summer, cold, hot, sunny, rain, cloudy, snow, sleet, windy, frost, ice, humid, thunder, lightning, fruits, vegetables, healthy eating, sugar, drinks, mum, dad, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins, step families, bus, car, bike, walking, scooter, left, right, straight, roundabout, up, down, in, out
Year 1 and 2 (from 1/9/26)		Visual resources, pair work, group work	Turn taking, eye contact, questions and answers, handshape, facial expression, body language,	As above asking questions and answering developing productive and receptive skills
Year 3 and 4		Visual resources, pair work, group work, children demonstrate what they have learnt.	Turn taking, eye contact, questions and answers, handshape, facial expression, body language, Spatial awareness	Extended weather vocab, additional family signs, variation of directions
Year 5 and 6		Visual resources, pair work, group work, children demonstrate what they have learnt by asking questions and answering.	As above including role shift, Practical scenarios, real life experiences. Questions and answers sessions	As above with addition weather vocab, additional family signs, variation of direction inside and outside directions with placement in pair work conversation skills

Summer Term

Year group	Topic	Content	Skill as outlined above	New vocabulary signs
Reception (from 1/9/26)	Deaf awareness Questions in BSL order Animals and pets Hobbies Calendar Time	Visual resources, copying of interaction with everyday actions	Turn taking, eye contact, questions and answers, Handshape, facial expression, body language	Tap shoulder, clear lip reading, facial expressions, deaf/Deaf, light, windows, turn taking, hands up, face to face, visual, who, what, where, why, when, how, which, painting, drawing, football, swimming, reading, cooking, months, days of the week, year, time, money, numbers, age,
Year 1 and 2 (from 1/9/26)	Money Age	Visual resources, pair work, group work	Turn taking, eye contact, questions and answers, handshape, facial expression, body language	As above asking questions and answering developing productive and receptive skills
Year 3 and 4		Visual resources, pair work, group work, children demonstrate what they have learnt.	Turn taking, eye contact, questions and answers, handshape, facial expression, body language, Spatial awareness	Extending everyday emotions, hobbies signs
Year 5 and 6		Visual resources, pair work, group work, children demonstrate what they have learnt by asking questions and answering.	BSL youth certificate Progression in confidence with vocabulary and sign order. Ability to demonstrate with fluency various conversation topics.	Pair work Recapping conversation skills