



Controlled Schools' Support Council

Sign Language Programme newsletter

June 2019

Engaging with Sign - a language for you and me



Engaging with Sign – a language for you and me is a programme of sign language workshops delivered by the Controlled Schools' Support Council. More than 300 pupils from nine controlled schools enjoyed this programme and parents at each of the participating schools also availed of a parent workshop. Funding for the programme was secured by CSSC from the Department for Communities' Sign Language Partnership Group in August

2018. CSSC's application was informed by engagement with the National Deaf Children's Society and Action Deaf Youth both of which support deaf children and their families. Maeve Walls, Director of Culture at the Department for Communities commented how "this programme seeks to give deaf children the best start in life through the development of deaf-friendly learning environments in their school."

PROGRAMME LAUNCH

Launched at Ballymacash Primary School in December 2018, UTV Live and Cool FM reported on the programme. Tracey Woods was interviewed by Frank Mitchell on U105 about the purpose and benefits of participation.

SIGN LANGUAGE TUTOR

Anthony Sinclair has been teaching British Sign Language for seven years. Since obtaining his PGCE in Sign Language in 2016, he has devised sign language programmes that have been delivered in a number of primary and post-primary schools across Northern Ireland. Anthony's workshops are movement based and encourage children to move, play and learn through activities that are designed to be fun.



Tracey Woods, School Support Officer

"I have been struck by what a beautiful language sign language is. We often hear this said of French, Spanish or Italian but there is no language more expressive than sign. Whilst one class participated in each school, the learning has been disseminated to other pupils in the school in very creative ways and this will help to create a deaf friendly environment in each school. Parents who attended the workshops are not only sharing in their child's learning but also increasing their own awareness of sign language and the experiences of the deaf community."



Participating schools

Nine controlled primary schools participated: Ballymacash Primary School, Cregagh Primary School, Ballycarry Primary School, Ballysally Primary School, Hart Memorial Primary School, Lurgan Model Primary School, Glynn Primary School, King's Park Primary School and Springhill Primary School.

EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

The pupil and parent workshops were evaluated and the comments were extremely positive.

"I couldn't believe how much my daughter picked up in such a short space of time."

"I have always wanted to learn sign language and now I am inspired to enlist on a local course."



"The parent workshop gave a greater understanding as to what it is like to be deaf, the difficulties and struggles faced. It raised awareness of the things we may be doing wrong when communicating with a deaf person and what we could do to improve this."



The participating schools spoke highly of the workshops and inspiring comments confirmed this.

"The pupil workshops catered to a variety of needs and allowed children to learn in a fun and engaging way. The children were very excited to show off their new communication skills and vocabulary. The parent workshop was superb as it allowed parents of deaf and hearing children to meet and explore the similarities and differences in their experiences. The carefully planned activities allowed adults to see how isolating and difficult it can be for a deaf child or deaf adult to live in a 'hearing world.'"

Margaret-Anne Christie, Teacher in the Hearing Impaired Unit at Cregagh Primary School.

Roundtable discussion

On May 30th CSSC held a roundtable discussion to share the learning and outcomes from the programme of workshops. Attendees included representatives from the participating schools, Action Deaf Youth, National Deaf Children's Society, British Deaf Association, Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment and Parentkind. Discussions affirmed the positive impact of the workshops on both the deaf child and the hearing child, the real appetite for sign language learning in schools and the desire to sustain the learning from the programme through the development of educational resources.



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