



## **The Constitution of The Sign Bilingual Consortium**

### The Sign Bilingual Consortium Mission Statement

Sign bilingual education promotes equal access and entitlement to the language, culture and heritage of both the deaf and hearing community. In so doing, it empowers schools and services to provide the means by which their pupils can gain access to communicative, linguistic, cognitive, academic, social and emotional development.

***'Excellence and achievement through sign bilingual education'***

[www.signbilingual.co.uk](http://www.signbilingual.co.uk)

### **1. The Title.**

1.1 The name of this organisation shall be The Sign Bilingual Consortium.

### **2. The Constitution.**

2.1 The Sign Bilingual Consortium is a group of headteachers, heads of services and Deaf professionals working in Sign Bilingual Education Provision. A definition of Sign Bilingualism, philosophy and policy can be found in Appendix 1.

2.2 Its members represent schools and services for deaf children across England, Scotland and Wales with links to \*Deaf organisations, higher education and research bodies.

2.3 We represent the needs of deaf children and their families on local and national bodies.

2.4 The purpose of The Sign Bilingual Consortium is to support the development of Sign Bilingual education.

### **3. Objectives.**

3.1 To support TOD's and professionals in the field to raise standards of achievement for Sign Bilingual children.

\*Throughout this document we use Deaf to refer to those deaf people who consider themselves as culturally deaf, who use sign language as their main or only language, and identify with the Deaf community. This use of the term Deaf follows a convention which was introduced by James Woodward and later developed by Carol Padden to refer to members of a cultural minority group which uses sign language as its first or preferred language. Swanwick, R. and Gregory S. (2007)

#### References

Swanwick, R. and Gregory S. (2007) *Sign Bilingual Education: Policy and Practice*. Coleford: McLean Publishing.  
Woodward J. (1982) *How You Gonna Get to Heaven if You Can't Talk with Jesus: On Depathologizing Deafness* (Their spelling and caps) Silver Spring, MD, USA, TJ Publishers.  
Padden C, and Humphries T. (1988) *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture*. London, Harvard University Press.

- 3.2 To raise awareness of Sign Bilingual philosophy, policy and practice, taking full account of increasing technological advances within the context of deaf education.
- 3.3 To promote the equal status of British Sign Language and English and to ensure that both are regarded as languages of instruction and taught as subjects.
- 3.4 To promote the use of language specific assessments for BSL and English in order to take in to account, the child's preferred language.
- 3.5 To promote equal access and entitlement to statutory assessments for sign bilingual students.
- 3.6 To link with the Deaf community and organisations.
- 3.7 To link with universities and develop research opportunities.
- 3.8 To lead working groups in four focus areas; Curriculum Development, Research, Dissemination and Information, Publicity and Website Development.
- 3.9 To disseminate best practice through seminars and workshops for the continuing professional development of professionals in the field.

#### **4. Membership of the Steering Group.**

- 4.1 Membership of the Steering Group consists of those professionals who fully endorse *Sign Bilingual Education: Policy and Practice* (Swanwick and Gregory, 2007). Coleford: McLean Publishing.
- 4.2 Requests for new membership will be considered by the Steering Group of The Sign Bilingual Consortium at their Annual General Meeting.
- 4.3 The Sign Bilingual Consortium Steering Group invites additional people to attend meetings as necessary.

#### **5. Membership Subscriptions.**

- 5.1 There is a membership subscription per school/ service which is reviewed annually. Currently there is no subscription charge for membership.

#### **6. Collection of the Steering Group Membership Subscriptions.**

- 6.1 The annual, non-refundable subscription is usually £300 for individuals, schools and services per annum payable on April 1<sup>st</sup>. We will always ensure that the income from membership is adequate for the needs of The Sign Bilingual Consortium.

#### **7. The Steering Group.**

- 7.1 The Steering Group of The Sign Bilingual Consortium currently consists of representatives from schools and/ or services which offer Sign Bilingual provision. Further details of these members can be found in Appendix 2.

**8. Areas of Responsibility.**

8.1 The Steering Group of The Sign Bilingual consortium have determined the following core areas of responsibility:

1. Curriculum Development
2. Research
3. Dissemination
4. Information, Publicity & Website Development

Lead members of the Steering Group responsible for these areas can be found in Appendix 3.

**9. Posts of Appointment.**

9.1 The Steering Group of The Sign Bilingual Consortium will appoint a Secretary. The Secretary is responsible for arranging meetings, taking notes, typing up and distributing draft minutes and chasing actions etc. Information on the role of the Secretary and contact information can be found in Appendix 4.

**10. Meetings of the Steering Group.**

10.1 The Steering Group of The Sign Bilingual Consortium meets at least once a year for its Annual General Meeting using the Constitution as a guide to setting the Agenda.

10.2 A minimum of three members shall form a quorum.

10.3 The meetings are chaired on a rotating basis by a member of the Steering Group and the Chair normally holds office for one year. The Chair determines the Agenda in liaison with the Secretary.

**11. Finance and Audit.**

11.1 The budget for The Sign Bilingual Consortium is held by one school/ service and accounts are submitted annually at the AGM meeting.

11.2 The budget will be audited annually.

**12. Affiliation with other organisations.**

12.1 The Consortium may, at the discretion of The Steering Group, affiliate with other organisations in order to form links with groups sharing a common interest.

**13. Winding up.**

13.1 Should it be agreed, that The Sign Bilingual Consortium be wound up or amalgamated with some other organisation The Steering Group shall be responsible for settling debts out of Consortium Funds and distributing surplus monies to bodies similarly concerned with the education of deaf children and young people.

## Appendix 1

### **“Sign Bilingual Education: Policy and Practice” (Swanwick and Gregory, 2007) Coleford: McLean Publishing.**

#### **Definition**

A sign bilingual child is one who uses two or more languages in their daily life, at least one of which is a sign language.

Sign bilingual education is an approach to the education of deaf children which, in the UK, uses BSL and English.

#### **Philosophy**

The philosophy of the sign bilingual approach to education has its roots in a linguistic and cultural minority view of deafness and a social model of disability. It is based on recognition of the following:

- Equality of opportunity regardless of language, ethnicity, race, gender, and disability.
- The value of diversity in society, including linguistic and cultural plurality.
- The language and culture of Deaf people.
- The goal of the removal of oppression and the empowerment of deaf people
- That deaf children have the same potential for language and learning as hearing children and the right to access to the knowledge, skills, and experiences available to hearing children, in an appropriate and relevant curriculum.

#### **Policy**

- The terms used to describe deaf children reflect linguistic and cultural preferences.
- Deaf children are expected to achieve the same levels of educational attainment, social responsibility, employment and citizenship as their hearing counterparts.
- Decisions made about deaf children’s education and educational requirements are based on their strengths and abilities, not on what they are perceived as being unable to do.
- Deaf pupils are potentially members of both the hearing society and the Deaf community.
- BSL has a significant role in the development and education of deaf pupils.

## Appendix 2

### **Current Members of the Steering Group**

Representative(s) from the following schools and/or services are currently members of the Steering group of The Sign Bilingual Consortium:

- Aberdeen School for the Deaf – Scotland.
- BATOD.
- Blanche Nevile School – London.
- Bradford Sensory Service.
- Elmfield School for the Deaf – Bristol.
- Frank Barnes School – London.
- Hamilton Lodge School & College– Brighton.
- Heathlands School – St Albans.
- Highland Service for deaf children – Scotland.
- Knotty Ash DRB – Liverpool.
- Leeds DAHIT.
- Longwill School – Birmingham.
- Royal School for the Deaf – Derby.
- University of Edinburgh.
- University of Leeds.

## Appendix 3

### **Areas of Responsibility.**

The lead members of the Steering Group responsible for the following areas are:

- |                                     |  |                           |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Curriculum Development           | Alison Carter (Primary), Longwill School & Michael Dennington (Secondary), Elmfield School |                           |
| 2. Research                         | Rachel O'Neill   | University of Edinburgh   |
| 3. Dissemination                    | Karen Riley  | Sign Bilingual Consortium |
| 4. Information, Publicity & Website | Paul Burrows   | Sign Bilingual Consortium |

Information on the developments in these areas can be obtained through the Secretary.

## Appendix 4

### **1 The Role of the Secretary.**

- 1.1 To coordinate meetings with the chair/ host of the session (school, service, University).
- 1.2 To prepare and circulate the Agenda for the meeting at least seven days before the actual event.
- 1.3 To type out the report of the meeting as soon as possible after the session.
- 1.4 To have the content and the format of the report agreed with the Chair before its circulation.
- 1.5 The report should highlight, for colleagues, those action points for which they have agreed responsibility.
- 1.6 The time limit for publishing the minutes should be within 7 to 14 days, the latter being the absolute maximum.
- 1.7 To agree with the members of the consortium, in the light of experience, the exact format that both the Agenda and report should take.
- 1.8 To ensure that interpreters are booked for each session.
- 1.9 To be responsible for making contact with speakers for the Consortium.
- 1.10 To be the main point of contact for people interested in information from The Sign Bilingual Consortium.

The current Secretary can be contacted by email at: [SBCSecretary2003@gmail.com](mailto:SBCSecretary2003@gmail.com)

[www.signbilingual.co.uk](http://www.signbilingual.co.uk)