

<b>Authority:</b>	<b>Inverclyde Council</b>
<b>Case Study Focus:</b>	<b>Parental engagement and British Sign Language (BSL)</b>
<b>Establishments:</b>	<b>Moorfoot Primary School, Nursery Class and Garvel Deaf Centre</b>
<b>Learners' stage/s:</b>	<b>Whole school community</b>

## Introduction

### About the educational establishment and their learners

Moorfoot Primary School, Nursery Class and Garvel Deaf Centre is a non-denominational establishment, situated in the Trumpethill area of Gourrock, Inverclyde. The school, in its elevated position with many open aspects and views across the Firth of Clyde, is set within a residential area which contains a combination of local authority and private housing. The local golf course is nearby and adds to the open-ness of the area. The school currently has a roll of 256 with most children living within the catchment area. While Garvel Deaf Centre serves as a base to support all deaf and hearing impaired pupils in Inverclyde, it is also an important resource available to schools and families across Inverclyde and beyond. In order to access the service and resources which Garvel provides, some children in attendance at the school live outwith the school's designated catchment area.

The school building was completely refurbished in 2017/18 at a cost of £5m and has the look and feel of a brand new school. The fit for purpose school accommodation offers bright and airy classrooms and includes large and flexible learning areas to support learning outdoors. The dining hall, gym, nurture room and IT suite branch off from the newly widened, sky lit corridors which flow throughout the school. On the exterior, the entrance plaza, senior playground / dining terrace and secure nursery playground are notable features of the school's new look. The MUGA (Multi use games area) has been a popular addition within the school grounds and is used extensively to support many aspects of learning.

## Background

Moorfoot Primary, Nursery Class and Garvel Deaf Centre promote an inclusive environment where all pupils have the opportunity to feel welcome, safe, happy and included. Hearing and non-hearing pupils have many opportunities to interact with each other on a daily basis and this highlights the importance of language and communication as being fundamental aspects of the school in relation to its values. British Sign Language (BSL) is a significant characteristic of the school and is embedded in the school's ethos. All children, hearing and non-hearing learn BSL from Nursery onwards, continuing right through to the end of Primary 7. Furthermore, P7 pupils also have the opportunity to work towards gaining a Level 1 SQA qualification in BSL should they choose to do so.

Each class in the mainstream school is taught BSL on a weekly basis by a deaf tutor who works across Garvel and Moorfoot. Moorfoot Primary's approach to language teaching and learning is robust where pupils in the mainstream classes learn French (L2) from Nursery onwards and Spanish (L3) from P5. Both of these languages are taught in line with the 1+2 languages policy in Scotland, with BSL in addition to this. While some pupils from Garvel are able to access elements of the curriculum in the mainstream school, learning additional languages such as Spanish and French is mostly an option for non-hearing pupils at high school. However, some children in Garvel are beginning to learn independently how to sign using Spanish sign language and also French sign language.

Moorfoot Primary is within the Clydeview Academy cluster where pupils can continue language learning in French and Spanish. Pupils in Garvel transfer to Garvel Deaf Centre based within Clydeview Academy at the end of P7 to continue their secondary education. Here they will have the opportunity to learn French or Spanish.

## Implementation

### Planning and Implementation

In building this case study, colleagues from SCILT and Education Scotland visited the school to get a better understanding of how it engages and supports parents, what measures are in place to support parents of hearing and of deaf children and how BSL features within the school curriculum in relation to other languages. Based on this, a joint list of questions was compiled in preparation for the interviews which featured staff from Moorfoot/Garvel, deaf/ hearing pupils and parents/family members of hearing and non-hearing pupils.

Parental engagement is recognised in the [National Improvement Framework](#) as one of seven key drivers in achieving excellence and equity in Scottish education. The engagement of parents and families can help raise attainment for all and help to ensure every child has an equal chance of success. The National Improvement Framework parental engagement driver includes actions to support improvement in parental engagement, parental involvement and family learning. Parents, carers and families are by far the most important influences in a child's life. Their support can play a vital role at all stages of education. ([Parental engagement and family learning](#), Education Scotland)

In the following clip, Alison Irvine shares information about how the school involves and includes parents with many aspects of their children's education.

[Head Teacher, Alison Irvine](#) (YouTube video)

Moorfoot is active in promoting parental engagement and family learning and offers innovative ways in which to support parents with their children's learning, namely the online learning blog. This online tool provides parents with support and information to help them support their children with their learning across a variety of curricular areas including BSL. Parents have the opportunity to access some elements of basic BSL such as simple greetings and the alphabet on the learning blog where video clips show how to sign correctly. Pupils at Moorfoot and Garvel are well versed in BSL as they learn it from nursery onwards however for some parents with deaf children, knowledge of BSL can be limited. The school had enquiries from parents of hearing children who had been introduced to BSL. These parents also showed interest in learning BSL. Provision was already in place for those parents and families of deaf learners to learn BSL but by providing additional support for parents of hearing children, this would provide a further opportunity for parents and families of deaf learners to practise their skills. With this in mind, the school organised with Paul Tipling, tutor for the deaf, for informal BSL classes to be held on Friday afternoons for any interested parents.



The aim of the classes was to offer parents, carers or other family members of deaf and hearing children the opportunity to learn British Sign Language in a familiar, relaxed and informal environment. By supporting parents to develop their knowledge and understanding of BSL, this improves the communication between them and their deaf or hearing impaired child. It also helps parents support their children with their learning at school. In addition to this, it raises greater deaf awareness within and outwith the community. In the following clip, Paul Tipling shares details about the BSL adult classes at Moorfoot.

[Paul Tipling](#) (YouTube video)

## Impact

### Impact on parents

The impact of the support offered to families at Moorfoot has been extensive, positively affecting families within and outwith the school's catchment area. Not only has this impacted positively on the core family unit, it has in some cases extended to members of the wider family. Many parents and carers have been happy to share their experiences on how the school has helped them and how it has made a difference to family life. By learning to sign, they are able to communicate more effectively with their non-hearing child. Providing parents with further information on how deaf and hearing impaired pupils are being supported in school has been invaluable. In addition, offering BSL classes to parents, carers and family members have allowed for the development of language skills in using BSL. This will allow for effective communication between hearing and non-hearing family members, strengthening relationships and building confidence.

*'Putting on the Friday class with Paul and being able to come in and be a part of that in a friendly and open manner has been good.'*

*'I can communicate with the children. I know what they're saying now. We do practise at home and they help me out a little bit. I'm really keen to do Level 1 (BSL) and get better. The classes have definitely prompted me to do it. I don't think I would have done if I hadn't have had Paul teaching us at the start. He makes you feel a lot more relaxed and not quite so awkward.'*

*'I have two deaf grandsons but only one comes to Moorfoot. By attending the BSL classes, I can communicate better with my grandson now and I notice that he isn't frustrated in the way he used to be. Since (learning) the sign language, I can communicate – not all of the time but quite a lot and he has calmed a lot. I can see a big difference in him.'*

In the following clips, parents share their experience on how the school has supported them and their deaf child and others share their experience of attending the school run BSL classes and the positive impact that these have had on the family as a whole.

[Parent video clip \(01\)](#) (YouTube video)

[Parent video clip \(02\)](#) (YouTube video)

### **Impact on pupils**

Moorfoot Primary, Nursery Class and Garvel Deaf Centre is an inclusive campus where all children interact freely with each other both in and outwith the school. Inclusion is woven throughout all of the school's values and BSL plays a major role in connecting the values which underpin the ethos of the school. Overall pupils have a positive attitude towards all languages taught at Moorfoot/Garvel and from a young age, value their importance in today's society both locally and beyond.

*'It's good if all my friends are taught sign language in school, even my hearing friends because it's easy for me to understand and it's good for them because they can improve their sign language aswell. I don't want communication to be bad. I want communication to flow quite nicely for conversation.'* (Garvel pupil)

In the following clip, pupils from Moorfoot Primary and Garvel Deaf Centre share their experiences of language learning in school and explain why language learning is important.

[Moorfoot Primary Deaf Pupils](#) (YouTube video)

[Moorfoot pupils](#) (YouTube video)

## Impact on staff

In both Moorfoot and Garvel, staff value the importance of all language learning that takes place in the school. In order to support BSL users in the mainstream school, staff members, whether beginners or non-beginners upskill themselves in BSL in order to communicate effectively with BSL using pupils. In addition to developing their own communication skills and knowledge of deaf awareness, they successfully implement many strategies to support the deaf or hearing-impaired learners in their classroom, ensuring all needs are suitably met. Whilst Paul Tipling works at length with all pupils and some parents, he provides support and training for staff to develop a working knowledge of BSL in the school. Staff members from Moorfoot and Garvel work closely together to ensure that all learners, both hearing and non-hearing are confident and effective communicators in whichever language they use and are encouraged to celebrate its usage at any opportunity at home, school and in the community.

The following clips from Moorfoot and Garvel staff provide further details on their roles in supporting hearing and non-hearing children access the curriculum successfully.

[Principal Teacher](#) (YouTube video)

[Moorfoot teachers](#) (YouTube video)

[Moorfoot teachers 2](#) (YouTube video)

## Next Steps

The school is committed to developing family learning and parental engagement opportunities. It aims to do this by:-

- Continuing to offer BSL adult classes for parents and members of the community. The classes will be run online for interested parties and will be recorded to offer accessibility for all
- Continuing to develop and expand the school's online learning blog to support parents with their children's learning
- Offering Spanish language classes for parents
- Providing a virtual 'Parent Surgery' for parents who may have a query and would like to 'check-in' with a member of staff at the school
- Inviting parents to Q and A sessions around particular curriculum areas eg Numeracy and Maths during Maths Week Scotland
- Introducing "Family Quiz" nights

- Offering live events on a digital platform where parents can utilise the chat box facility to ask any questions, allowing for greater interaction
- Organising family walking groups at weekends with staff members to promote exercise, positive mental health and connecting with others.

In addition to this, as Moorfoot is a BSL using school, Moorfoot would like to raise the awareness of deafness in the community and develop a greater deaf awareness culture across the cluster primaries.