



**Oifig an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Office of the Minister for Education and Skills**

Ms Emer O'Gorman  
Meetings Administration  
Corporate Services Department  
South Dublin County Council  
County Hall  
Tallaght  
Dublin 24



**PLEASE QUOTE OUR REF NUMBER ON ALL CORRESPONDENCE**  
Our Ref: 1303853

12 September 2013

Dear Ms O'Gorman

I refer to your correspondence to the Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny TD, which has been referred to the Minister for Education and Skills, Mr. Ruairi Quinn T.D. for response, regarding the motion agreed by South Dublin County Council on 8th July 2013 in relation to the official recognition status of ISL.

I wish to advise you that Section 2 of the Official Languages Act 2003 states that "the official languages" of the State are (a) the Irish language (being the national language and the first official language) and (b) the English language (being a second official language) as specified in Article 8 of the Constitution.

I also wish to advise that Irish Sign language (ISL) has formal recognition in the Education Act, 1998. Under the Act, it is a function of the Minister for Education and Science (Skills) to ensure, subject to the provisions of the Act, that there is made available to each person resident in the State, including a person with a disability or who has other special educational needs, support services and a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person. This includes provision for students learning through ISL.

A number of initiatives which seek to promote, develop and implement ISL in order that it will achieve greater recognition and use in the education system are currently in place. These include:

- the special schools for the deaf/hearing impaired have been encouraged in relation to the use of sign language in class.
- funding for an ISL weekly home tuition service whereby deaf tutors visit the homes of deaf pre-school children and deaf school-going pupils to provide training in ISL for the deaf children, pupils, their siblings and parents.

- funding is also made available through the Special Education Support Service (SESS) to enable individual teachers and whole school staff to undertake courses in Irish Sign Language which are available throughout the country through a variety of providers.

In addition, the Visiting Teacher Service for Children and Young People with a Hearing Impairment is provided by this Department from the time of referral through to third level education. The Visiting Teacher service provides advice and support to ensure that the needs of children and young people with hearing impairment are met. This service is available at pre-school, primary and post-primary levels. Specifically, the service works in partnership with parents of pre-school children with hearing impairment, visiting their homes and/or meeting them in groups to inform, advise and offer guidance in matters pertaining to their education and overall development and in helping their children to derive maximum benefit from the educational opportunities available.

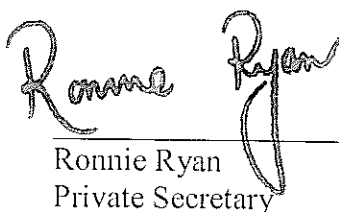
I also wish to clarify that assessment, rehabilitation and information services for children with hearing impairment and their families are funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE), either directly or indirectly. Services provided include communication therapy and lip reading classes as well as sign language classes.

This Department, through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), has established and funds a Centre for Deaf Studies in Trinity College, Dublin which provides diploma courses for ISL/English interpreters, deaf tutors and in deaf studies. The course modules deal with issues such as sign linguistics, bi-lingualism and socio-linguistics of sign language. The course is delivered in seminar sessions/group work and the award of the diploma is based on continued assessment and a project and course design. The HEA was allocated €365,000 in core funding to the Centre in the past academic year.

Finally, I wish to advise that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) recently published its Policy Advice on the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland, which makes a number of recommendations for the improvement of educational provision for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, including recommendations relating to ISL provision. This policy advice is available on the NCSE's website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie). The Department has established a working group which will consider and implement the recommendations of this report in accordance with available resources.

I hope this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



Ronnie Ryan  
Private Secretary