

SEND Bulletin NO. 9



MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulties)

Pupils with moderate learning difficulties (also known as global learning difficulties) have a general developmental delay. They have difficulties with learning across all areas of the school curriculum. Those with MLD comprise the largest group of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. Many of these learners have a delay of about three years and consequently need a high level of support within the mainstream classroom.

Many pupils with moderate learning difficulties will also be suffering from low levels of self-esteem and motivation. They may become resentful and refuse to attempt new work as they perceive themselves to be likely to fail before they start. It is likely that they will become over-reliant on teaching assistants to help them with tasks and they will need much encouragement and praise to persuade them to attempt new challenges which are within their capability and develop greater independence.

Key characteristics

Children with MLD may have:

- immature listening/attention skills
- Immature social skills
- reliance on a teaching assistant to direct them within the class situation
- a poor auditory memory
- a poor visual memory
- difficulty acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills
- difficulties with comprehension skills
- a requirement for high level support with investigation and problem-solving activities
- poor verbal and non-verbal reasoning skills
- difficulties with applying what they know to other situations
- some motor coordination difficulties.

Support strategies

You may need to:

- provide teaching assistant support at the beginning and end of a lesson, but encourage the learner to work independently whenever possible
- ensure that learning activities are broken down into small steps and are clearly focused
- simplify, differentiate or abbreviate class tasks
- provide a multi-sensory approach to learning
- provide activities to develop motor skills
- use visual and concrete materials to aid understanding
- keep language simple and familiar in guided group work
- make use of songs, rhymes and rhythm to aid learning sequences (such as the alphabet, days of the week)
- keep instructions short and concise
- ask children to repeat instructions in order to clarify understanding
- provide alternative methods of recording, such as labelled pictures, diagrams or flow charts
- ensure repetition and reinforcement within a variety of contexts
- allow extra time to complete a task
- monitor and record progress so that each small achievement is recognised
- organise activities to develop listening and attention skills, such as sound tapes
- practise a range of sequencing activities, such as pictorial activity or story sequences, word/sentence sequences, days, months and number sequences
- develop role-play and drama activities including the use of finger and hand puppets to aid the understanding of new concepts
- help the learner organise his written work by using writing frames
- praise every effort and successful achievement of new skills.

If you have any interesting information or resources which you would like to share with your colleagues via this fortnightly bulletin, please e-mail them to me:

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Many thanks
Anne