

Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)

A ready reference for Parents and Teachers

Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)

The term 'moderate learning difficulties' is sometimes used to describe students who find it extremely difficult to achieve expected levels of attainment across the curriculum, even with a differentiated and flexible approach. These students do not find learning easy and can suffer from low self-esteem and sometimes exhibit unacceptable behaviour as a way of avoiding failure.

Main Characteristics

- Difficulties with reading, writing and comprehension.
- Unable to understand and retain basic mathematical skills and concepts.
- Immature social and emotional skills.
- Limited vocabulary and communication skills.
- Short attention span.
- Under-developed co-ordination skills.
- Lack of logical reasoning.
- Inability to transfer and apply skills to different situations.
- Difficulty remembering what has been taught.
- Difficulty with organising themselves, following a timetable, remembering books and equipment.

Potential Impact of Characteristics on Learning

- Poor reading, writing and numeracy skills.
- Problems with processing, retaining and recalling information.
- A limited vocabulary, immature use of language and grammatical structures.
- Difficulties in understanding and responding to instructions and open-ended questions.
- Poor listening and a short attention span.
- Poor on-task and completion of task behaviour.
- Poor organisational skills.
- Immature social and emotional skills.
- Disruptive behaviour through constantly distracting and talking to other students.
- The use of a range of avoidance techniques.
- Restless behaviour.

Suggested Support Strategies

- Provide structure and routine to lesson format.
- Break learning down into small steps.
- Plan short tasks and varied activities that include repetition of key concepts and ideas presented.
- Differentiate in terms of content, resources and outcomes and use of a wide range of methods of communication including speech, images, pictures, charts, diagrams and symbols.
- Support learning through the use of concrete examples, e.g. word lists, pictures, photos, symbols, sequencing prompts, shortening text, etc.
- Repeat information and instructions in different ways.
- Use of simple language and range of questioning techniques.
- Rehearse with student what is to be recorded before they begin and use a range of structures to support reporting and recording, i.e. scaffolding, writing frames.

- Provide environment and physical structure to reduce inappropriate and disruptive behaviours, e.g. sitting away from obvious distractions.
- Identify clear rules and expectations.
- Identify approaches to the management of disruptive behaviours, and avoid attention-seeking behaviours, and apply consistently.
- Keep listening activities brief.
- Catch them being 'good' and reward immediately.

SEN Staffing

Deputy Head Student Progress & Inclusion: Mrs M Sims

Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator (SENDCo): Mrs J Hale

Specialist Teacher: Mrs J Wheeler