Module 16: Students with Mild and Moderate Disabilities

This module will begin by exploring common, mild to moderate disabilities, and their characteristics. You will learn about how SEN needs are identified through EHC Plan Needs Assessments, and In-School SENCO Assessments. The module will illustrate planning and instruction strategies recommended for teachers who work with SEN, before highlighting some examples in different subject areas. You will finish the module by learning more about how teaching is assessed, and relevant Ofsted assessment criteria.

What you will learn in this module:

16.1 Common Disabilities

16.2 Identification of Need

16.3 Planning and Instruction

16.4 Learning in Different Subject Areas

16.5 Assessment of Teaching

16.1 Common Disabilities

16.1.1 Mild and Moderate

An individual with a severe disability is unlikely to be able to care for themselves or to communicate with others around them. **The terms 'mild' and 'moderate'** cover a wide range of individuals at various levels of disability. Many will be able to talk and communicate normally, but might have problems with learning new skills. Others may have difficulty in the classroom or the playground. Mild and moderate levels of disability are discussed in greater detail in section *6.1.2.*

It is important to keep in mind that every disability is different, and every individual experiences their disability in differing ways. This means that even if a student has a diagnosis for a particular disability, schools are responsible for understanding and meeting each child's needs on an individual basis.

16.1.2 Examples of Mild to Moderate Disabilities and Their Characteristics

Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD):

- Easily distracted and unable to concentrate on a task for a long period of time.
- Poor organizational and time management skills.
- Difficulty with following instructions.
- Difficulties with reading comprehension and math problems.

Asperger Syndrome

- Good language skills, often advanced, but difficulty with communication, and forming friendships.
- Average or above average intelligence.
- A limited understanding of body language, facial expressions, and the emotions they convey.
- Anger and aggression may be displayed as well as eccentric behavior.
- A strict adherence to their rules and rituals which they might impose on others.
- Limited and sometimes obsessive interests.
- Poor coordination, and difficulties with fine motor skills.

High Functioning Autism

- **Similar characteristics of Asperger Syndrome, with the addition of childhood language delays.**

Brain Injury

The characteristics of brain injury vary widely depending on the individual, but may include:

- Poor short-term memory.
- Difficulties with balance and coordination.
- Processing problems and difficulty remembering words.
- Trouble with organizing thoughts, and problem-solving.

General Learning Disabilities

- Neurologically-based problems with speaking, listening, writing, reading, logic and/or mathematical skills, due to processing difficulties.
- Average or above average intelligence.
- A marked gap between intellectual potential and actual academic achievement (in one or many subject areas or task types) due to processing difficulties.

Hearing Loss

- Reduced ability to hear what is going on around them.

Low Vision

- Vision loss in both near and far distances.

Medical Disabilities

- One or more systems of the body (e.g. immune, neurological, circulatory, digestive, respiratory) are affected by a condition, for example:
    - HIV
    - Diabetes
    - Cancer
    - Epilepsy
    - Fibromyalgia
    - Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME)
    - Lupus

Physical Disabilities

- **A physical disability that results from an accident, a neuromuscular disease** or a congenital condition, for example:
    - Cerebral palsy
    - Cystic fibrosis
    - Paralysis
    - Polio
    - Spinal cord injury
    - Spina bifida

Psychiatric Disabilities

- Behavior and/or psychological difficulties that are consistently present i.e. not a response to a traumatic event, for example:
- Social anxiety
- Anorexia
- Depression
- Cyclothymia
- Mood disorder
- Munchausen syndrome
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

16.2 Identification of Need

It is the responsibility of schools to ensure that the educational needs of all of their students are met. To this end, schools are required to publish information that explains how students with SEN will be supported and included in the activities of the school. However, in the case of students who have a statement of SEN, a Learning Disability Assessment, or an EHC Plan, the Local Authority is legally responsible for ensuring suitable provisions are arranged. This may mean locating supplementary services beyond a schools capability in addition to existing schooling.

The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is responsible for coordinating the support and assistance offered to those with SEN. This includes working in conjunction with classroom teachers, Teaching Assistants, SEN Assistants (also known as Learning Support Assistants), and other staff members while the student is in school.

16.2.1 How are Students Brought to the Attention of a SENCO?

There are two ways that students will come to the attention of a SENCO:

- The result of a formal assessment by the Local Authority
  - A statement of SEN
  - A Learning Disability Assessment (LDA)
  - An Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan
- A parent, teacher or other member of staff raising concerns about:
  - Behavior
  - Academic attainment

Please note, EHC Plans are currently replacing statements of SEN and LDAs, and all students will be transferred to the new system between 2014-2017.

16.2.1 Assessment

If there is no existing formal assessment by the Local Authority, the school's SENCO will be required to conduct an assessment. Every child with SEN has different strengths, challenges and needs. Therefore, in-depth assessments are required to ensure that each child receives tailored support that best meets their needs.

To complete the assessment, the SENCO will get to know the child and their needs in a number of different ways:

- The SENCO might spend time observing the child in environments that are challenging for them, such as the classroom or the playground.
- The SENCO might spend time with the child on a one-to-one basis, and interact with them. If the child is sufficiently verbal, they will talk to them about their feelings, goals, and thoughts about the situation. The approach is exploratory rather than disciplinary.
- The SENCO will get in contact with the child's parents to find out more about the child, and to discuss any concerns they may have.
- The SENCO will speak to members of the staff who are involved in the child's care and education to gain more information about their behavior and attainment.
- The SENCO will review all records and information about the child.
- The SENCO might consult an educational psychologist, health professional or specialist teacher.
- If the SENCO feels that the child's needs cannot be met by the resources the school can offer, they are likely to get in contact with the Local Authority to apply for an EHC Plan Assessment (discussed in section 16.2.2).

Assessments allows the SENCO to formulate a plan that will be followed throughout the school with regards to the individual child.

16.2.2 EHC Plan Needs Assessment

An Education Health and Care Plan is a detailed report about individual children and young people, up to the age of 25, who require more support than a SENCO or an in-school SEN team

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can offer. An EHC Plan can be requested by parents, teachers, SENCOs (as described in section 16.2.1), health visitors, doctors, and nursery workers.

The Local Authority is legally responsible for assessing children who are recommended for EHC Plans, creating EHC Plans, and ensuring they are implemented.

When conducting an EHC Needs Assessment, the Local Authority will get advice and information about the child or young person from:

● The young person themselves or the child's parents.
● The head teacher or principal of the school attended.
● Any healthcare professionals involved in the care of the child or young person.
● An educational psychologist.

16.2.3 EHC Plan Sections

There are 12 sections to be completed on an EHC Plan.

Section A: The views, interests and aspirations of the child and their parents, and the young person.

Section B: The child or young person's special educational needs.

Section C: The child or young person's health care needs which relate to their SEN.

Section D: The child or young person's social care needs which relate to their SEN or to a disability.

Section E: The outcomes sought for the child or young person (including outcomes for life).

Section F:The special educational provision required by the child or young person.

Section G: Any health provision reasonably required for the learning difficulties or disabilities which result in the child or young person having SEN.

Section H1: Any social care provision which must be made for a child or young person under age 18 resulting from s.2 Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970 (CSDPA)

Section H2: Any other social care provision reasonably required for the learning difficulties or disabilities which result in the child or young person having SEN.

Section I: School or education placement.

Section J: Personal Budget including arrangements for direct payments.

Section K: Advice and information used in the EHC Needs Assessment.

16.3.1 Responsibility for Differentiated Provision

Differentiation, the process of tailoring academic instruction to meet the needs of every child in the class, was discussed in module 13. In this section of this module, we will provide examples of differentiation strategies used by teachers to accommodate the needs of SEN students.

The student's teacher, support staff, and SENCO are responsible for fulfilling what is recommended in the EHC Plan (or its older versions) to ensure that the student receives differentiated education that meets their needs. If the school cannot meet the requirements set out in the EHC Plan then the Local Authority is legally bound to arrange provision that can.

School staff are responsible for tracking progress. The Local Authority is also responsible for this, but school staff are in a better position to track progress on a day-to-day basis.

Any implemented strategies must be reviewed and remain flexible so they can evolve and change. Monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation are key practices that educators adopt to help improve outcomes for SEN learners. Teacher peer review, and mentoring, particularly by those with SEN experience, can also be beneficial.

In sections 16.3.2, 16.3.3 and 16.3.4, we will explore common recommendations for lesson planning and resources, instruction and communication, and classroom and exam arrangements for teachers working to accommodate the needs of those with SEN. Which of these are implemented by teachers depends on the child's SEN, their education provision strategy provided by the SENCO or the EHC Plan, and the limitations of the teacher and the classroom.

16.3.2 Lesson Planning and Resources

Provide instruction in as many forms as possible– auditory, text, pictorial, games , songs, etc.	Break large tasks down into small tasks	Include short breaks between tasks	Develop multi-sensory Lesson plans Include activities for visual, Auditory and kinesthetic learners

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Provide an overview of the syllabus to students before the beginning of term	Make information sheets and textbooks available in audio format	Enlarge printed materials	Print material on colored paper to reduce black-white contrast glare

16.3.3 Instruction and Communication

- Give students reminders before transitions.
- Ask students to repeat instructions or information back to ensure comprehension.
- Allow the use of a computer, scribe, reader, voice-activated word processing software or Dictaphone.
- Sit down to talk with a student in a wheelchair on an equal level.
- Do not touch or push a wheelchair unless asked to do so.
- Offer basic communication in sign language.
- Offer physical signals to hearing impaired children before speaking.

16.3.4 Classroom Arrangements

- Set clear expectations with aids such as classroom rule posters and pledges.
- Develop and maintain simple reward systems for staying on task, and behaving appropriately according to the expectations and rules.
- Set routines and carry them out consistently.
- Allow for flexibility in attendance requirements for students with appointments connected to their additional needs.
- Make accommodations for students with additional needs when they are in pain or suffer fatigue due to their additional needs or from their medication.
- Pay attention to seating arrangements. Make sure that students are able to access extra help, to remove themselves from distractions, to hear and see sufficiently to participate in their education, or to move around with their wheelchair.
- Allow drinks in class for students on medication that causes thirst.
- Provide extra time management and study skills training for students that need it.

16.3.5 Exam Arrangements

In conjunction with examination boards and authorities, teachers might consider:

Offering extra time for tests and exams	Creating a distraction-free exam area
Allowing rest breaks during exams	Allowing the use of a calculator, spell checker, and thesaurus
Allowing the use of a computer, scribe, reader, voice-activated word processing software or Dictaphone	

16.4 Learning in Different Subject Areas

This section will focus on the strengths and challenges of, and ideal teacher responses to, students with mild to moderate SEN in reference to different subject areas. As the range of SEN is so broad, the examples explored in this section will be limited to dyslexia, dyspraxia and Asperger Syndrome.

16.4.1 Literacy

Dyslexia – Sequencing tasks such as learning the days of the week, the alphabet, or following a series of instructions can pose problems. Words seem to 'swim' on the page.

Teachers can ensure that written materials use free, specialist fonts to ease reading difficulties, and can illustrate points using simple diagrams to aid in improved sequencing abilities.

Dyspraxia – Poor handwriting, poor pronunciation and speech can be caused by the physical coordination difficulties associated with dyspraxia.

Teachers can help improve outcomes by **implementing special movement programs t**hat guide children with dyspraxia through developmental reflexes centered on sensory systems of the body, thereby improving coordination.

Asperger Syndrome – Despite a varied vocabulary and an almost professional speech style, higher level language and the meaning of words can be difficult to grasp. Subtext, jokes,

metaphors, and irony are often misunderstood. Phonetic approaches in learning to read may not be successful.

Teachers can aid learning of phonetics by using visual cues, musical notes, and rhyming songs. Subtext can be explored through 'social stories', and '**thinking-out-loud'** by expressing thoughts in words to help establish the role of meaning in language.

16.4.2 Numeracy

Dyslexia – 50-60% of students with dyslexia show signs of dyscalculia, having particular problems with comprehending the language and vocabulary of mathematics, as well as sequencing and orientation.

Teachers can integrate multisensory teaching techniques. They can use objects such as counters or small objects to teach abstract, mathematical concepts in a concrete way. A mathematics vocabulary book can be helpful, particularly if the student assists in compiling it. Number squares and calculators should be made available.

Dyspraxia – Memorizing multiplication tables and other memory-based mathematical concepts can be problematic. As well as sequencing, copying from the board correctly, and presentation of work.

Teachers can use color, stories, humor ,and images to help new concepts make their way into memory. Students may be asked to work on a computer to produce their work to avoid presentation issues. They may be provided with handouts with diagrams and text to aid comprehension, and reduce stress of copying from the board.

Asperger Syndrome – **May be high achievers in mathematics due to the standard rules and procedures of the subject.**

Problems may arise when applying abstract mathematical concepts to problem-solving that involves real world situations or representations of them.

Teachers can aid students by presenting information related to problem-solving in a visual or 'experience' format, whichever best suits the learner. They will prepare the learner well in advance, and allow them to opt out or transition gradually into the new experience.

16.5.2 Within-School Feedback

Teachers undergo ongoing assessments as part of their professional development, and to ensure best practice.

This assessment will usually be coordinated by the department head or the senior leadership team using the following methods:

- Classroom observations by fellow teachers and line managers.
- Pupil feedback
- Reading teacher self-reports and logs.
- Lesson plan and assignment reviews.

These are put together to create a comprehensive picture of the teacher's skills and practice, highlighting strengths, and identifying areas for further development. This enables the teacher to set informed goals for improvement, and build accountability with the school's leadership team.

16.5.2 Ofsted

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, who regulate and inspect schools, and educational provisions. **Ofsted originally made school inspections every seven years, but that will be reduced to every three years starting in 2015**. Schools, and their activities are rated on a scale of 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate'.

The following 'outstanding' grade descriptors are indicators of how teachers will be assessed with regard to their teaching of SEN students:

- **Teachers demonstrate extensive knowledge** and understanding of the subjects they teach. They use questioning highly effectively, and demonstrate understanding of the ways pupils think about subject content. They identify pupils' common misconceptions, and act to ensure they are corrected.
- **Teachers plan lessons very effectively,** making maximum use of lesson time and coordinating lesson resources well. They manage pupils behavior highly effectively with clear rules that are consistently enforced.
- **Teachers provide adequate time for practice** to embed the pupils' knowledge, understanding, and skills completely. They introduce subject content progressively and constantly demand more of pupils. Teachers identify and support any pupil who is falling behind, and enable almost all to catch up.

- **Teachers check pupils' understanding systematically** and effectively in lessons, offering clearly directed and timely support.
- **Teachers provide pupils with incisive feedback**, in line with the school's assessment policy, about what pupils can do to improve their knowledge, understanding, and skills. The pupils use this feedback effectively.
- **Teachers set challenging homework, in line with the school's policy** and as appropriate for the age and stage of pupils. It consolidates learning, deepens understanding, and adequately prepares pupils for work to come.
- **Teachers embed reading, writing, communication, and appropriate mathematics exceptionally well across the curriculum.** This will ensure that all pupils are equipped with the necessary skills to make progress. For younger children, phonics teaching is highly effective in enabling them to tackle unfamiliar words.
- **Teachers are determined that pupils achieve their goals**. They encourage students to try hard, recognize their efforts, and ensure that they take pride in all aspects of their work. Teachers have consistently high expectations for all attitudes towards learning.
- **Students love the challenge of learning and are resilient to failure.** They are curious learners who seek out and use new information to develop, consolidate, and deepen their knowledge, understanding, and skills. They thrive in lessons, and regularly take up opportunities to learn through extra-curricular activities.
- **Pupils are eager to know how to improve their learning.** They capitalize on opportunities to use written or oral feedback.
- **Parents are provided with clear and timely information** on how well their child is progressing, and how well their child is doing in relation to the expected standards. Parents are given guidance about how to support their child.
- **Teachers are quick to challenge stereotypes,** and the use of derogatory language in lessons and around the school. Resources and teaching strategies reflect the value and diversity of pupils' experiences. They provide students with a comprehensive understanding of people and communities beyond their immediate environment. Students love the challenge of learning.

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