

**General Learning Difficulties** may show themselves in the following ways:

- low levels of attainment across the board in all forms of assessment;
- difficulty in acquiring skills (notably literacy and numeracy) on which much other learning in school depends;
- difficulty in dealing with abstract ideas and generalising from experience;
- a range of associated difficulties, notably in speech and language (particularly for younger children) and in social and emotional development.

### **Moderate and Complex Learning Difficulties**

Definitions of these learning difficulties, by national and worldwide organisations, characteristically include three criteria and implement them in slightly different ways.

- An exceptionally low score on an individual test of intelligence, of approximately two or more standard deviations below the mean (e.g., ~70).
- Significant limitations, relative to chronological age, in two or more of the following domains: communication, social/interpersonal skills, self-care, home living, self-direction, leisure, functional academic skills, use of community resources, work, health, and safety.
- The onset of difficulties is during the developmental period, prior to age 18 years.

Children with **Complex Learning Difficulties** have severe or profound learning difficulties and some will have additional physical, medical or sensory difficulties. They are likely to remain at very early developmental levels throughout their school career and require support as adults from the wider community.

Their learning, development and functioning will be significantly below half their chronological age, that is, with standard scores on tests of development or intelligence below 50. In the vast majority of cases these children's needs are recognised in their early infancy and referred to the Authority by the Health Authority.

Children with Complex Learning Difficulties are described as:

*"Children who have varying degrees of learning difficulty, which may be moderate or severe, compounded by physical and/or sensory difficulties."*

Children with **Multiple Learning Difficulties and Severe Challenging Behaviour** are described as:

*"Children who have complex learning difficulties which are compounded by other problems, for example, total physical dependency, severe communication difficulties; included in this definition are children with severe autism and psychotic disturbances."*

Children with **Moderate Learning Difficulties** produce standard scores below 70 on tests of intelligence and attainments. Their development and learning is characterised by immaturity and greater adult dependence than the majority

of their peers. Generally they should be capable of independent living once they leave school. The needs of these pupils are usually recognised during the earlier years of primary schooling.

Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties are described as:

*"Children whose conceptual development is poor. Their delayed learning is symptomised by low attainments in the basic areas of language, reading, spelling, writing and number. Their short-term memory is poor and they may have specific learning difficulties. They have associated difficulties in socialisation and relationships, self-esteem, poor motor and self-help skills, and poor speech. Their problems may be compounded by mild medical or sensory difficulties and their behaviour patterns are sometimes inappropriate."*

Pupils with **Mild Learning Difficulties** refer are generally overall slow learners; falling within the lower attaining ten percent of the population.