

Level F descriptor

Level F descriptor

Description of needs: Substantial and severe lifelong difficulties needing support into adult life – potential for supported living and work arrangements.

Cognition and Learning

- Children and young people will have a life-long learning disability and will have a combination of substantial and severe difficulties which will have a significant impact on all areas of learning and living throughout their lives which may include:
 - communication
 - learning / understanding
 - acquisition of new learning, and generalisation of knowledge and skills
 - memory and organisation of self/possessions
 - appropriate social interaction
 - emotional wellbeing
 - physical difficulties, including co-ordination
 - sensory processing
 - visual and hearing difficulties
 - acquisition of social independence / self-help skills / personal care skills
 - behaviours that can challenge that are mainly because of the above medical/health needs
- will be learning at early developmental levels and require support throughout their lives. Chronological equivalent 3 - 4 years, (at secondary).
- Where there is a standardised assessment of cognitive ability, they will be assessed as below the 1st percentile.
- will be able to maintain attention and complete and follow simple and familiar tasks and routines independently for up to 10 minutes.
- acquisition of learning will be slow.
- may have an inconsistent developmental profile and may demonstrate an uneven profile of ability, particularly in areas which require judgement, comprehension, application of abstract concepts and social interaction.
- may be able to learn to travel independently to familiar places / on familiar routes.
- Will be likely to be able to move on to supported living and work arrangements in their adult lives.

Communication and Interaction

- will have expressive communication at single word to simple phrase / sentence level,
- may rely on gesture and signing to communicate proactively and / or to support verbal communication.
- may have verbal communication that is difficult for unfamiliar people to understand.
- may understand at a higher level than their ability to communicate expressively
- may struggle to appropriately initiate and manage friendships, and some may struggle to maintain friendships as they grow older. Some may be over-familiar with people they do not know.

Social, emotional, and mental health

- may find it easier to make connections with younger children and young people but not understand the differences in socially acceptable behaviours as they get older.
- may have had adverse childhood experiences / experienced trauma which will impact significantly on their learning and development.
- are likely to display vulnerability and naivety in social relationship, sexual health, mental health, independence, stranger danger, and online activity and will have difficulties in assessing risks and keeping themselves safe.
- may display specific interests and eschew attempts to move them to other interests. Interests may be chronologically lower than those typical for a child of their age.
- may be rigid in their thought and behaviour patterns.
- may have higher levels of anxiety but find it difficult to communicate how they feel, which can lead to frustration, and in some cases challenging behaviour, including self-harm.
- may have difficulties regulating their behaviour without adult support / frequent reminders.
- may be susceptible to Mental Health needs as they grow older but lack the cognitive ability to understand and communicate their feelings.
- may be vulnerable to external risk factors as they grow, including exploitation.

Sensory, physical, and medical needs

- may have several agencies involved with them and their family
- may have physical or sensory needs that require therapy advice and support.
- may have additional medical needs that require support from school nursing.
- are likely to have difficulty recognising, understanding, and communicating their medical / health needs which may lead to delay in treatment.

Level descriptor F support needed

Curriculum, teaching, and learning

- Core skills curriculum comprising communication, language, and literacy; problem solving, numeracy; physical development; learning-to-learn; creative exploration; and personal, social, and emotional development.
- The approaches to teaching and learning will require significant adaptations / differentiation to meet the range of needs.
- A personalised learning programme with very finely graded tasks for language and communication skills, independence, cognitive development, behaviour for learning, and personal and social development.
- The curriculum will promote emotional wellbeing.
- Concepts and skills must be taught systematically in multiple contexts. There will need to be a strong emphasis on overlearning and pupil transference of skills across real life settings.
- Continuous and sustained support in all areas of the curriculum.
- Continuous and sustained access to life skills delivered through the curriculum to achieve an appropriate level of independence.

- Likely to need lifelong support to be as independent as possible as they grow older and to problem solve and navigate new and risk situations.
- Significant support to access Further Education and employment, including voluntary work.
- Preparation for supported living arrangements where appropriate, with significant packages of support.
- Regular small group and some 1:1 teaching.
- A predictable and structured routine, usually in class groups of around 10 – 12 with on average 1 teacher and 2 support staff for most of the timetable.
- Higher staffing ratios for some aspects of curriculum delivery.
- Significant pastoral care as part of the everyday curriculum
- Personal and social development, including sexual health and sex education will need to be taught in small steps with lots of opportunities for over-learning.
- Some children and young people will require alternative / augmentative communication aids to support their communication needs (high and low tech AAC)

Environment

- Access to specialist teaching facilities which will include small group and one-to-one teaching areas, and secure, stimulating and adapted outdoor play areas.
- Easy and frequent access to a local community that facilitates the development of a range of functional skills in a real life setting in preparation for adult life.
- Many activities outside of school will need to be risk assessed and support put in place to mitigate these risks.
- Older children and young people will need specific advice and support to access work related learning / work experience placement, including world of work taster opportunities.
- Older children and young people will need access to FE College Link courses
- Some children and young people will require specialised furniture/equipment to help them access the curriculum.

Behaviour support

- Some children and young people will require a behaviour support plan that is consistently applied across different settings. This will include teaching and support to enable them to self-regulate.
- Some children and young people will require access to additional staff to support management of their behaviour at times when their behaviour is more volatile.
- Staff will require access to specialist behaviour support and training.
- Some children and young people may be assessed as requiring access to therapy, counselling, or referral to CAMHS / clinical psychology to support them.

Multi-agency and family support

- Frequent contact and collaboration with parents/carers to build relationships and work together to ensure consistency of approach and transference of skills across settings, sharing and modelling strategies wherever possible.
- Varying levels of inter-agency co-operation and planning, which may include health teams, sensory needs team etc.
- Some children and young people will require regular delivery of therapy support through a plan devised and monitored by therapy staff and implemented throughout the day by trained classroom staff to ensure an integrated education/therapy provision.
- Some children and young people may have a health care plan.
- Children and young people with complex hearing or sight needs will require a programme of intervention devised and monitored by a qualified specialist sensory teacher (HI/VI/MSI) delivered by school staff.

Staff training and expertise

- Staff working with these children and young people require specialist and ongoing training to understand and meet severe learning and associated needs. This will include training on:
 - Specific subjects, including literacy, numeracy, and ICT
 - Specific ICT support programmes / software
 - Language and communication needs, including assistive technology
 - Delivery of integrated therapy programmes, focus on functional independence and life skills
 - Sensory needs, including VI and HI.
 - Working with families and other agencies
 - Positive behaviour management methodology including positive handling in line with national guidance and de-escalation techniques.
 - Trauma informed practices
 - Safeguarding for children and young people with significant SEND

Was this page useful?

- [Yes](#)
- [Neutral](#)
- [No](#)

Last updated: 03 Jan 2025
