

What is DME (Dual or Multiple Exceptionality?)

- DME is a term used to describe those who have a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) **and** have High Learning Potential (HLP.)
- Often, these characteristics mask each other so that a CYP's SEND and/or HLP are not recognised until a crisis point is reached.
- CYP with DME may present very differently depending on their environment, exacerbating difficulties in identifying learning needs and leading to conflict between school, parents and the LA.
- CYP with DME need opportunities to be challenged and excel in areas of strength as much as they need support with learning difficulties.
- Neurodiverse and sensory impaired CYP are most likely to have DME.

What are the risks of failing to identify DME?

- CYP works hard to compensate for or disguise areas of need. This can lead to low self esteem and a distorted view of their own learning ability.
- ‘Masking’ can negatively impact emotional regulation and mental wellbeing.
- If HLP is not recognised, CYP lacks sufficient challenge to develop the metacognitive skills needed for future learning.
- CYP begins to struggle in school and emotional, behavioural or academic difficulties trigger SEND assessments/diagnosis.
- Focus is now on ‘deficits,’ perpetuating cycle of low self esteem and insufficient challenge for the learner.
- Higher levels of support needed (EHCP, specialist placement) and/or poorer health and educational outcomes for CYP.

How can we support CYP with DME?

- Early identification is important in supporting CYP with DME. By KS1 many CYP with DME are successfully masking their differences and/or abilities.
- Identify common indicators of DME at EYFS and share with parents and professionals.
- Use alternative methods of assessment (e.g. IQ and cognitive ability testing) instead of peer benchmarking to track academic progress and identify barriers to learning.
- Use a strengths based approach that includes CYP interests.
- Work closely with parents and other professionals.

Parents of CYP with DME...

- Are often exhausted!
- Can be misunderstood and labeled 'over-anxious', 'unconcerned' or 'pushy'.
- Spend months or years trying to access services to identify and support their CYP's needs. Parents can often see evidence of issues at home, but struggle to obtain the support of professionals.
- Become increasingly frustrated at their inability to access support for their CYP. As this happens relationships with teachers and other professionals can deteriorate.
- May pursue formal complaints or legal remedies if they cannot access the support their CYP needs.

Other resources....

- Potential Plus UK is an independent charity helps parents and schools support CYP with High Learning Potential. <https://potentialplusuk.org>
- DME Factsheet by Potential Plus <https://potentialplusuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/F01-Dual-or-Multiple-Exceptionality-DME-180913.pdf>
- *The School Handbook for Dual and Multiple Exceptionality* by Denise Yates and Adam Boddinson