

Williams Syndrome

Meghan Finn is as charismatic as she is talented. ... [a] beautiful young lady who happens to have Williams syndrome ... that she lives and deals with courageously every day.

Taken from Meghan Sings! <http://www.meghansings.ws/>

This is a rare congenital disorder of chromosome 7. It is diagnosed with a blood test and often can go undiagnosed for a long time. Characteristics of the syndrome are distinctive 'elfin' features, good auditory skills, love of music, an outgoing social nature and a gift for vocabulary.

Williams syndrome can affect the student cognitively, socially and behaviourally, while motor difficulties may also present. Motor difficulties may have an effect on handwriting, Physical Education and practical work. While some students have particular needs, it is important to note that not all of these difficulties are relevant to every student. However, they are typical of the syndrome and at least some will apply to each student. The students will probably show inconsistency in the level of their abilities across various domains.

Visual spatial needs will affect most school activities, especially practical work and Physical Education. Activities requiring spatial analysis skills, such as learning to distinguish between different letters and learning left and right, may prove a challenge. The students' verbal abilities may be better than their cognitive abilities. Cognitively, students vary greatly from having above average abilities to moderate general learning disabilities.

Difficulties with numeracy have been observed in some students as have delays in language acquisition. Difficulties with inappropriate behaviour, such as talking out of turn in the classroom, can also present. Students may have a short attention span and become easily distracted, which can result in the student not following directions, getting out of their seat, etc.

Despite the tendency for the student with Williams syndrome to have an overtly sociable nature, they can have difficulties establishing peer friendships and can be overanxious. The student may also dwell on 'favourite' conversational topics, showing a poor awareness of general conversational skills. The student may display difficulties in modulating emotions and may seem to over-react (e.g. tearfulness in response to what appears as mild distress).