

# Neurodevelopmental Team

## Information for Teachers of Children with ADHD



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## Introduction

A child with ADHD is easily distracted, fidgety and talkative. They may interrupt you while you're explaining things to the class and have difficulty waiting their turn.

They may be a disruptive influence on the class, and also need extra help with learning.

So as a teacher, what can you do?

The information provided here gives an overview of the issues ADHD brings to the classroom.

As well as these ideas, a good relationship with the parents is important in getting the best out of a child with ADHD. Let them know about the good changes in their child's behaviour, as well as the bad, and ask for help from your special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), or relevant members of the guidance staff or learning/behavioural support teams in school if you need it.

We all know that children diagnosed with ADHD are different from one another, and will need different help to meet their individual needs. You may find one or two bits of information particularly helpful or you may find the whole pack helps you to support the child. You will know what is best for the child!

# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

## What is ADHD?

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder which often becomes obvious in early childhood. The behaviours are due to underlying problems of poor attention, hyperactivity and impulsivity.

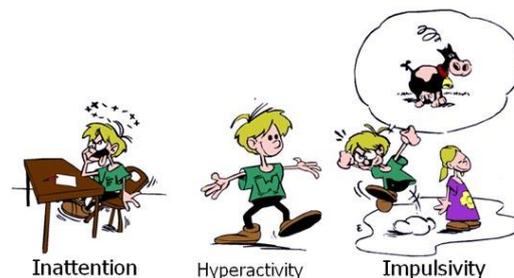
Many children, especially under-fives, are inattentive and restless. This does not necessarily mean they are suffering from ADHD. The inattention or hyperactivity becomes a problem when they are exaggerated, compared with other children of the same age, and when they impact on the child, their school, social and family life.

## How common is it?

About 2 to 5% of school aged children can suffer from ADHD. Boys are more commonly affected than girls; it has been suggested that this is because it is easier to spot in boys compared to girls.



# Causes and Symptoms



## What causes ADHD?

We do not know exactly what causes these disorders. ADHD can run in families. Sometimes parents feel blamed for not having controlled their child, but there is no evidence that poor parenting directly causes ADHD. However, it is important to note that parents can play a crucial role in helping and managing a child with ADHD.

## What are the symptoms?

ADHD can present with different behaviours depending on the age, setting (i.e. school, home, playground) and even motivation (e.g. when doing an activity or something a child likes). Not all children have all the symptoms. This means some can just have problems with poor attention, while others are mainly hyperactive.

Children with problems of attention can appear forgetful, distracted, not seeming to listen, disorganised, take ages to start doing things and then when they do they rarely finish it.

Children with hyperactivity seem restless, fidgety, and full of energy and 'always on the go'. They may seem loud and noisy with a continuous chatter.

Children with symptoms of impulsivity do things without thinking. They have difficulty waiting for their turn in games or in a queue, and interrupt people in conversation.

## What other problems can a person with ADHD have?

Children with ADHD can have other problems such as learning difficulties, autism, conduct disorder, anxiety and depression. Neurological problems like tics, Tourette's, and epilepsy can also be present. Children with ADHD can have problems with coordination, social skills and seem to be disorganised.

## How long will they have ADHD?

Many children diagnosed with ADHD do not require any treatment when they are adults.

The majority who receive treatment tailored to their needs when they are diagnosed may benefit considerably. They will have been able to catch up with their learning, improve their school performance and make friends.

Some are able to cope and manage by adapting their careers and home life.

However, some can have major problems, even as adults, requiring treatment. They may also struggle with difficulties in relationships, at work, in their mood and using drugs or alcohol.



# Diagnosis and Treatment



## How is it diagnosed?

There is no single, simple, definite test for ADHD. Making a diagnosis requires a specialist assessment, usually done by a child psychiatrist, specialist paediatrician or clinical psychologist. The diagnosis is made by recognising patterns of behaviour, observing the child, obtaining reports of their behaviour at home and at school.

## How is it treated?

A child suffering from ADHD needs intervention across all situations where the difficulties occur. This means support and help at home, school, with friends and community.

Firstly it is very important for the family, teachers and professionals to understand the child's condition and how it affects them. As they grow up, the young person themselves needs to be aware of their condition and how to manage it.

Teachers and parents may need to use behavioural support strategies like reward charts. Parents/family may find parent training programmes helpful, especially in managing the defiant behaviours which may arise from their hyperactivity.

At school, children may need specific educational support and plans to help with their daily work in the classroom and also with their homework. They may also need help to build their confidence and develop their social skills. It is important that there is good communication between home, school and the professionals treating the child to ensure that the ADHD symptoms are treated as well as possible, and that the child achieves their best potential.

Medications can play an important role in managing moderate to severe ADHD. Medications can help to reduce hyperactivity and improve concentration. The improved concentration gives the child the opportunity and time to learn and practice new skills. Children often say that medication helps them to get on with people, to think more clearly, to understand things better and to feel more in control of themselves. Not all children with ADHD will need medication.



## What can schools do?

Your child may attend an ordinary mainstream school or a special unit or specialist school. The policy and provision within local education authorities vary and the specific educational needs of children with ADHD are different, so that a detailed assessment of the individual child is necessary to determine which school is most appropriate.

The majority of children will be recognised within the school as having additional or different needs from their peer group and they should have an Individual Education Plan, sometimes called an individual support plan (ISP).

An IEP/ISP forms part of the special needs action record and lists:

- The child's targets – what you want them to do or behaviour you want to change
- The action you're going to take to help the child meet the target, e.g. small group work and the use of rewards
- How often the child will receive this help
- What help parents can give at home
- The date you're going to review the targets
- The outcome – filled in at the review date.

You should discuss the IEP/ISP with the child's parents and agree the actions with them. At this stage, you may not feel an IEP/ISP is necessary.

But if the child doesn't improve, this will become part of the next level of support and go on to form a component of the special needs action record.

Some children may require more support than is usually provided from within a school's resources and may need a formal statutory assessment, leading to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC), which will specify their main needs and the provision required to meet these.

The likely steps to an Education Health and Care Plan would be:

- ✚ Your child's teacher would first discuss the need for a statutory assessment with the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) and yourself, usually at a school review of your child's progress.
- ✚ Other professionals would have been involved in assessing your child and in planning programmes and their views would have been sought.

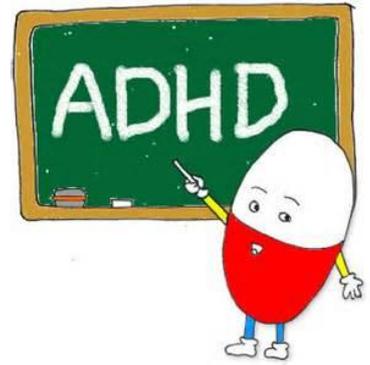
- ✦ If all are agreed that a formal assessment would be useful, a request is sent to the education authority setting out the reasons for this.
- ✦ If this is agreed, your child would be assessed and reports would be made on how to meet your child's needs within the school or in an alternative school.
- ✦ These are written in an Education Health and Care Plan.

Whatever school the child attends, it should be possible for the staff to meet her/his needs, in collaboration with the parents and other professionals. Staff will need to gain knowledge about the implications of ADHD for teaching and learning and be willing to modify the school environment and how the curriculum is delivered, for the placement to succeed.

There are aspects of school life and the curriculum which require special attention, whatever the type of school and whatever the nature of your child's difficulties. If staff are not aware of the ways a child is affected, then the child might be seen as naughty, lazy or non-compliant.



# Medication



There's no legal requirement for teaching staff to administer medication or supervise a pupil taking medication, but you may volunteer to do it.

If the child needs medication at school, you need to know what the medication is, when the child needs to take it and who will supervise him taking it.

Taking medication at school is something that bothers a lot of children. So, find a way of sending the child to take medication without making them stand out from the rest of the class. For example, give them a task to do and quietly remind him that on his way he needs to see the school secretary or nurse for his medication.

Most of the newer generation of medications for ADHD are long acting and can be administered once daily at home in the morning, eliminating some of the above concerns.

If you have any concerns about the medication, you should pass these on to the parents or guidance staff, or school nurse or doctor.

# Strategies

## Simple Strategies

A child with ADHD can present with very different and difficult behaviours at home, school or outside. However, there still needs to be boundaries and discipline. Having ADHD does not mean they will always disobey you or behave inappropriately (e.g. swearing or being violent). Children with ADHD can become easily frustrated because of their poor attention span and high energy levels. Some of the following can help manage these difficulties:

- ✚ Give simple instructions. Stand near them, look at them and tell them slowly and calmly what you want them to do, rather than shouting across the room.
- ✚ Praise the child when they have done what is required, however small it is.
- ✚ If needed, write a list of things to do and put it somewhere where it can be seen clearly (e.g. door of their room, bathroom).
- ✚ Break any task, like doing homework or sitting at the dining table, to smaller time spans such as 10-15 minutes.
- ✚ Give them time and activities to spend their energy like basketball, swimming.
- ✚ Be aware of their diet. There is *some* evidence about the effect of diet on *some* children. They may be sensitive to certain food additives and colourings. If parents notice that certain foods worsen hyperactivity, these may be avoided. It is best to discuss this with the child's parents.



## **In the classroom**

The watchwords for ADHD are routine, repetition and regularity. A child with ADHD has problems concentrating and will need your help to organise their time. You can do this by:

- Having rules clearly displayed on the wall
- Establishing a daily classroom routine – have regular times for stories, desk work, etc.
- Displaying the day's lessons on the wall or blackboard
- Providing structure through lists, timetables, deadlines and regular reminders.

At the end of the day you could also remind the class what work has been set, what's due the next day and review the instructions you've given. You could also use this time to get pupils to tidy their desks and work away.

The best place for a child with ADHD is:

- Near you
- Near the blackboard
- At the front of the room
- Away from windows
- Away from bright, colourful displays.

This limits distraction – which is also why children with ADHD don't work well in groups. If you have the option, seating in rows is best.

A clear system for keeping track of the work you set will also help a child with ADHD. You may have different folders for uncompleted and completed work, and use a colour code for different subjects.

Children with ADHD don't cope very well with change, so try to give the child prior warning about any changes to their routine.

## **Talking too much and interrupting**

Chattering and interruptions can be common at school, although they tend to decrease as the child gets older.

- If they're taking turns in a group, use a timer to set limits.
- Remind the whole class before they speak that they should give one sentence only.
- Remind the whole class to put their hand up if they want to talk.
- Teach your pupils to stop and think before talking. This will help a child with ADHD to learn to slow down before talking. You can do this by waiting 10 seconds before you accept answers from the class.
- Remind the whole class about the rules for interrupting. If they persists, talk to them on their own – not in front of the class.

- You could also use a reward system that is visible to the child, eg colour-coded cards. If the child gets to the end of the session without a red card, they get a star. If they get to the red card, they know the consequences.
- A child with ADHD is more likely to start interrupting as their medication wears off. In which case, it's worth checking if they have taken their medicine.

## **Inattentiveness**

ADHD causes problems with concentration. This means working alone at their desk is often difficult for children with ADHD – especially if you're using this time to focus on another pupil or small group.

## **Tips for handouts**

When making handouts for children with ADHD:

- Use large type
- Keep the page simple
- Don't put in extra pictures that don't relate to the task
- Underline key directions and vocabulary
- Only put one or two activities on each page
- Use borders to emphasise blocks of text.
- Make eye contact and stand near when giving instructions.
- Break down large tasks into small chunks. This will take a lot of planning on your part, but it's a way to work within the child's attention span and stops the child feeling overwhelmed.
- Keep tasks short, or as a series of short, different tasks.
- Get the child to repeat instructions back to you, to make sure they know what's expected.
- Use visual aids.
- Write checklists on the board.
- Provide handouts with an outline of key concepts or vocabulary at the start of lessons.
- Ask questions to keep the child's attention.
- Check on progress during the task.
- Work with the child: if they tend to lose focus as the day goes on, schedule more demanding tasks in the morning.

If a child is having problems sticking to a task, it can help to let them move around for a couple of minutes. Give the child a task such as getting crayons or materials, or get them to wipe the board for you.

## **Homework issues**

- Use a home-school diary or tell the parents what the homework is.
- Encourage the child to bring in something, even if they didn't finish all of it.
- Check if homework has been handed in. Completing homework is one problem for children with ADHD, but so is paying attention when you ask for homework before it disappears into desks, schoolbags etc.
- Remind pupils to 'check your work' so it becomes second nature. Children with ADHD tend to complete work and hand it in without checking it through.
- Discuss any specific difficulties with the parents. If budgets permit, one of the simplest things that can help children with ADHD is providing them with a second set of textbooks that they can keep at home.

## **Learning difficulties**

The child may have specific learning difficulties, for example problems with written expression. Colleagues in the learning support team may be able to help with these problems.

Ideas to tackle include:

- use visual cues
- give step-by-step instructions
- arrange for extra time on tests, or for the child to do the test in a quiet area or on a different day when their attention levels are better
- discuss with the SENCO what resources are available in the school, eg a social use of language programme, access to speech and language therapy programmes.

## **Peer difficulties**

The child may overreact to teasing or let themselves be egged on to doing something they shouldn't.

**Ideas to tackle**

- Keep a playtime diary: how did it go, were there any problems, what did you do, how did others react, what could you have done differently?
- Get them a play-buddy who's sensible and will be kind.
- Try circle time activities, such as choosing each child in turn and getting the rest of the class to say something nice about them.

## **Difficult behaviour**

If a student's behaviour becomes exasperating, try not to take it personally

- Make simple, clear rules and have them on display. This includes rules about asking questions, interrupting and classroom conduct.
- Manage classroom behaviour by walking around the pupils' desks. A wink or a smile is an effective way to reward good behaviour such as getting on with work.
- Actively reward the behaviour you want from the class. Praise specific behaviour instead of using generalisms such as 'well done' or 'good boy'.
- Avoid giving the whole class a punishment based on the ADHD child's behaviour.
- If the child is refusing to accept a punishment, tell them they have a couple of minutes to think about their refusal. Explain that they can use the time to decide to accept your consequence or face a more serious punishment.

## **Further support**

The SENCO or guidance team represent your first source of help and will advise on ways you can cope with difficult behaviour.

This will start with an IEP/ISP and may move on to a statement.

If the child has a statement, you should get some individual help for the child in the class. The level and type of support will depend on the statement wording.

If this isn't enough, you should discuss an early review of the statement. Other sources of support include the school nurse, doctor and school psychologist.

The child and adolescent psychiatrist, psychologist, ADHD nurse, or paediatrician who is responsible for the young person's medical care can also help, for example by attending and contributing to multidisciplinary meetings

## Ben's Story (11)



"I was always getting into trouble at school. The teacher used to tell me off for not sitting still, I'd try to sit down but it was hard – I would just want to get up and walk around. I was always getting into trouble for talking. The other children in my class would sit still and finish their work but I found this hard.

Mum and dad said I had a lot of energy. Sometimes my friends would tell me I was over the top. Mum says she couldn't take me anywhere when I was younger because I was so noisy and always on the go.

In the end, mum and dad took me to a clinic for children who have problems. They said I have ADHD and talked to my parents and teachers about how to help me. They gave me some medication – Ritalin. My mum and dad think it helps. I don't seem to get told off so much and can do my school work better."



# National Resources

## ADDISS

Address: ADDISS  
PO Box 340  
Edgware  
Middlesex  
HA8 9HL  
Tele. No: 020 8952 2909  
Email: [info@addiss.co.uk](mailto:info@addiss.co.uk)  
Website: [www.addiss.co.uk](http://www.addiss.co.uk)



ADDISS is The National **A**ttention **D**eficit **D**isorder **I**nformation and **S**upport **S**ervice.

ADDISS organises local and national seminars and provides information, support, training and resources on ADHD for parents, health workers and teachers. ADDISS works closely with a number of local support groups and can refer parents to these groups. They also have a wide range of information factsheets, books, and special sections for children, parents or professionals.

## ADHD Foundation

Address: ADHD Foundation Head Office  
151 Dale Street  
Liverpool  
L2 2AH  
Tele. No: 0151 237 2661  
Website: [www.adhdfoundation.org.uk](http://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk)  
Email: [info@adhdfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@adhdfoundation.org.uk)



ADHD Foundation, in partnership with individuals, families, doctors, teachers and other agencies, works to:

- Build a positive foundation for life.
- Improve life chances through better understanding and management of ADHD.
- Raise awareness & understanding of ADHD - change the negative perception of ADHD into positive.
- Bring about positive change and inclusion within policy and practice.
- Support schools, GP's, youth justice services and other professionals who work with people with ADHD.
- The ADHD Foundation supports achievement, educational attainment, mental health and employability.
- The Foundation works in a unique way. They work in partnership with those living with ADHD, enabling them understand and manage ADHD.

The team understands first-hand the issues around ADHD, sharing their experience and providing skill support and encouragement.

## Hyperactive Children's Support Group

Address: 71 Whyke Lane  
Chichester  
West Sussex  
PO19 7PD

Contact: Sally Bundy

Tele. No: 01243 539966

Email: [hacsg@hacsg.org.uk](mailto:hacsg@hacsg.org.uk)



The Hyperactive Children's Support Group is a registered charity which has been successfully helping ADHD/Hyperactive children and their families for over 30 years. The HACSG is Britain's leading proponent of a dietary approach to the problem of hyperactivity. The group provides workshops for parents and healthcare professionals to learn more about managing ADHD and hyperactive behaviour and how diet can help. Workshops can cover diet and behaviour, dyslexia behavioural management, autism and brain gym and are tailored made to your needs.

## Young Minds

Address: Suite 11,  
Baden Place,  
Crosby Row,  
London,  
SE1 1YW

Tele. No: 020 7089 5050

Email: [parents@youngminds.org.uk](mailto:parents@youngminds.org.uk) or [yomenquiries@youngminds.org.uk](mailto:yomenquiries@youngminds.org.uk)



YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

Driven by their experiences they campaign, research and influence policy and practice.

They also provide expert knowledge to professionals, parents and young people through their Parents' Helpline, online resources, training and development, outreach work and publications.

## Challenging Behaviour Foundation

Address: The Old Court House, New Road Avenue, Chatham,  
Kent, ME4 6BE  
Tele. No: 01634 838739  
Support Line: 0845 602 7885  
Email: [info@thecbf.org.uk](mailto:info@thecbf.org.uk)  
Website: [www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/](http://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/)



This charitable foundation offers information and support with challenging behaviour.

## Royal College of Psychiatrists

Address: 21 Prescot Street  
London  
E1 8BB  
Tele. No: 020 7235 2351 or 020 7977 6655  
Fax: 0203 701 2761  
Email: [reception@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:reception@rcpsych.ac.uk)  
Website: [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/problems/adhdinadults.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/problems/adhdinadults.aspx)



The Royal College of Psychiatrists is the professional body responsible for education, training, setting and raising standards in psychiatry.

The College produces a range of materials for mental health professionals and the public for a number of mental health problems, including ADHD.

## SOS!SEN

Website: [www.sossen.org.uk](http://www.sossen.org.uk)  
Helpline Number: 020 8538 3731



This is an independent telephone helpline for parents and others looking for information and advice about Special Educational Needs (SEN). Support is centred on the legal and procedural processes that are associated with finding provision for children with SEN.