






CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN/TEENAGERS WITH ADHD






Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition which causes three groups of behaviour difficulties:

-  **Inattentiveness**
-  **Hyperactivity**
-  **Impulsiveness**

It is thought that at least 5% of children/adolescents may be affected by ADHD and that at least one child in every classroom will have the condition. The exact cause is not known, but it seems that both genetic and environmental factors play a part, influencing how the brain develops and functions.

The core symptoms of ADHD create challenges for both pupil and teacher. The management is multimodal, the first line of which is the use of positive behaviour strategies, both at school and at home. It is therefore important for clear communication systems to be in place, and that all adults with responsibility for the child (both at school and home) work together using a consistent approach.

To reduce the impact of ADHD the following strategies are recommended:

-  **Structure:** routines, clear rules, clear directions, clear expectations.
-  **Salience:** cues, prompting, repetition of instructions.
-  **Consistency:** between all teaching staff.
-  **Motivation:** frequent calm positive praise, prudent consequences.
-  **Inspiration:** play to the child's strengths, capture imagination.





Further tips

- Setting up classroom: give the child **time** to **settle** in at start of day.
- Sit** at the **front** of the **classroom** and away from distractions.
- Sit** with children who are **quiet** and **not disruptive**.



Rules and routines

- Clearly visible **timetables**.
- Stick** to timetables when possible.
- Give **advance warning** of **changes**.
- Word rules **positively** ('walk' instead of 'don't run').
- Traffic light system** to regulate **noise** levels.
- Checklists** for routine tasks.

Structuring

- Tailor the **length** of activities for each **individual** child.
- Keep activities **short** and **simple** (break them down into structured steps).
- Involve** the child in **planning** to motivate.
- Communicate **expectations** for behaviour.
- Have **consistent** expectations.
- Follow through** with prudent **consequences** if necessary.
- Make sure the child experiences **success**.
- Aim to **gradually increase the length** of activities.
- Aim to **increase the complexity** of stimuli.
- Use **apparatus** to make learning fun.
- Try **flow charts** and **mind maps**.
- Allow regular **'movement' breaks** (stretching, walks, taking messages).



Verbalisation and cues

- Use **language** appropriate for the child's **level of understanding** and reduce to a minimum during activities.
- Keep instructions **brief**.
- Give instructions **immediately before** the activity.
- Frame instructions **positively** ('look at the paper' rather than 'don't look over there').
- Use **non-verbal cues** (finger pointing) to guide the child to the salient features of the task.
- Draw attention to **one thing at a time**.
- Repetition** of verbal instructions to aid understanding.
- Be alert for **signs of stress/over-excitability**.

Time, tests and transitions

- Have **small amounts** of work on each page or **cover up sections** not being worked on.
- Allow **extra time** for tests and homework.
- Avoid punishment** for **lapses in concentration** or **difficulties in sustaining effort** during complex learning tasks.
- Use **technology** to present tasks.
- Audio recording** of lessons.
- Allow **notes** to be **photocopied** and **annotated**.
- Using **timers** can also be helpful.
- Give the child **warning** of the **approaching end** of the session.
- Offer the child **other activities** to occupy them while waiting for others to finish.
- Include **'calm time'** after breaks and lunch.





Establishing control and focus of attention (younger children)

- Allow a few minutes **exploratory play** before starting structured learning.
- Begin **communication** when **standing beside** the child.
- Ensure the child is **sitting still** before giving them instructions.
- Use the child's **name** and establish **eye contact**.
- Keep instructions **simple**.
- Make sure the child can **see you** to receive **visual cues**.
- Instructions should be **related** to task.
- Ask the child to **repeat back instructions**.
- Use **gestures** and **repetition**.
- Give regular **positive feedback** (avoid too much as this can over-stimulate).





Summary

ADHD is often misunderstood and can cause problems for both pupils and teachers alike. It raises the risk of under-achievement at school as well as difficulties in accessing further education and employment. It can also lead to the development of mental health issues. Early recognition together with the right support can make a huge difference and help children to reach their full potential. Having ADHD should not be a barrier to success in life. Children with ADHD are frequently creative and enthusiastic and so classroom approaches should always aim to play to the child's strengths and raise their self-esteem.

Additional resources

ADDISS (National Attention Deficit Information and Support Service)

www.addiss.co.uk

Jessica Kingsley Publishers (books for parents and professionals)

www.jkp.com

Note

Parents/caregivers: Please give a print out of this information sheet to SENCO/teaching staff for their information.