

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



ADDvanced Solutions
Supporting you to find the answers

Impact on Learning of ADHD

ADHD is not in itself a deficit in intelligence, but it can mean that the intelligence of an individual is masked by their ADHD characteristics. Their ability to learn can be inconsistent which will have a negative impact on their education. For this reason, it's very important that teachers and schools have a sound understanding of the needs of their pupils with ADHD. This will enable them to support the pupils more effectively and help them to manage their ADHD characteristics in order to have better access to their learning.

ADHD characteristics (inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity) will often have a major impact on a pupil's ability to learn facts and develop skills. This will mean they may fall behind, and this can in turn affect social and emotional well-being as well as educational outcomes.

Overlaps:

In addition, there are other related specific learning difficulties (see separate information sheet), such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia which are often co-morbid with ADHD, which can cause problems with reading, spelling, co-ordination, writing and maths. There are strategies that can help support pupils with these conditions and it is important that teachers are aware of how they can identify them and provide support. ADHD can also be co-morbid with Autism, and some pupils will struggle with rigid thought patterns and find change hard to deal with.

Sensory Processing Difficulties commonly co-occur too, and it is important that staff are aware and sensitive to any sensory difficulties that are affecting the pupil.

Unrecognised or unsupported ADHD in school can lead to missed potential and sometimes challenging and disruptive behaviour as a result of boredom, confusion about boundaries, embarrassment or shame. In some cases, this can lead to fixed term and possibly permanent school exclusion.

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The core difficulties of ADHD are:

Inattention, Impulsivity and Hyperactivity.

Difficulties with inattention can mean important details in lessons and homework can be missed, as well as changes to schedules etc. They will struggle to filter out the unimportant classroom occurrences from the main focus of the lesson and can be easily distracted by things other pupils would hardly notice. They can be supported by placing them close to the focus of the learning activity, and by minimising distractions. Regular work breaks will also help an individual with ADHD to re-focus their attention.

Impulsivity can result in calling out in class, interrupting the teacher and other pupils, and other disruptive behaviours. It often leads pupils to start on a task without being fully prepared, or fully understanding what is needed. Pupils can react to a given task without fully formulating the best answers and often misunderstand what is required of them. We all have impulses, the differences with the ADHD brain is that the inhibitors (simply, the reasons for not acting on a particular impulse) take longer to be processed and so the pupil will have acted immediately, only to realise later why they should have held back.

Hyperactivity is often expressed in restlessness and pupils can be very distracted by their need to move if this is restricted. Introducing 'allowed movement' can be a very helpful strategy to relieve this pressure. Their hyperactivity can be displayed in both physically and verbally – pupils seem to move around as though driven by a motor and continually speak in a similar unrelenting way. Again, this can make pupils more susceptible to school exclusions, if it is not understood or managed effectively.

Pupils with ADHD commonly have difficulties with **executive function** (see separate information sheet) which affect their ability to sequence and to organise effectively. There could also be a difficulty with keeping track of time and finishing work on time or keeping more than one thing in their head at a time. Planning and reflecting on work can also be a challenge. Organisation of work and assignments can be very challenging for a pupil with ADHD.

Understanding, and effective and appropriate support by their teachers is essential for these young people to succeed in school and to live with a positive sense of their own achievements and accomplishments.