



ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

Reintegreat School Toolkit

Supporting Children with ADHD

Understanding ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that impacts attention, impulsivity, and self-regulation.

There are two main types, though many children present with both:

- **Inattentive type** – difficulties with focus, organisation, and memory.
- **Hyperactive–Impulsive type** – challenges with self-control, restlessness, and impulsive behaviour.

Children with ADHD are often capable, curious, and creative learners, but without support they may face barriers that affect their learning, social interactions, and self-esteem.

Challenges ADHD Pupils May Face

Inattentive

- Easily distracted, struggles to filter distractions.
- Appears not to listen, misses details.
- Careless mistakes, slow to complete work.
- Forgets instructions, loses belongings.
- Poor organisation and task completion.

Hyperactive–Impulsive

- Constant fidgeting, excessive talking.
- Difficulty staying seated.
- Runs/climbs when inappropriate, struggles to play quietly.
- Interrupts, blurts answers, acts without thinking.
- Low tolerance for waiting turn.

Executive Function Difficulties

ADHD affects **planning, memory, and problem-solving**, leading to challenges in:

- Organisation and time management
- Self-monitoring and persistence
- Emotional regulation
- Predicting outcomes and learning from mistakes
- Managing change and transitions

Social and Emotional Challenges

- Misreads social cues, interrupts or dominates peers
- Struggles to maintain friendships
- Mood swings and emotional intensity
- Low self-esteem masked by “silliness” or bravado
- Vulnerability to bullying and social exclusion

Recognising ADHD in the Classroom

Signs may include:

- Flitting between tasks, difficulty focusing
- Talking over others, acting without thinking
- Restlessness, fiddling, tapping
- Difficulty settling after playtime
- Variability in mood and performance
- Poor handwriting or clumsiness
- Messy, disorganised workspace
- Struggles with tedious or repetitive tasks

Note: Behaviours should always be viewed in context. Medical assessment is essential for diagnosis.

Supporting Strategies

1. Communication

- Gain attention first: use name, eye contact, or a gentle desk tap.
- Keep instructions **short and simple**; break tasks into steps.
- Write instructions down and allow pupils to tick them off.
- Use **visual prompts** (timetables, “now and next” boards).
- Provide choices to increase engagement.
- Stay calm, soft-spoken, and patient.
- Accept that fidgeting can support concentration – offer a “listening ball” or discreet fidget tool.

2. Classroom Practice

- Seat pupils strategically – near support, away from high-traffic areas.
- Keep desks clear – provide only what is needed for the task.
- Present learning in engaging, varied ways.
- Use frequent short quizzes or smaller tasks instead of long tests.
- Provide regular brain breaks – ideally involving movement.
- Use post-it notes, colour coding, or labelled pots to aid organisation.
- Praise **effort and partial success**; avoid shaming for unfinished work.

- Avoid removing playtime – physical activity improves focus.
- Recognise strengths and celebrate small successes.

3. Playtime & Lunchtime Support

- Provide **structured support** at unstructured times.
- Model and role-play social skills.
- Encourage reciprocal conversations and turn-taking.
- Offer immediate, calm feedback on social misunderstandings.
- Pair with positive role models or a peer mentor.
- Give purposeful jobs (e.g., handing out balls).
- Provide quiet alternatives to the playground/lunch hall if needed.
- Ensure all staff supervising social times are aware of strategies in place.

4. Organisation

- Label belongings clearly.
- Use checklists, timetables, or whiteboards.
- Protect and cover books to reduce distraction from torn/messy pages.
- Provide all resources in one space to reduce wandering.
- Limit distracting personal possessions but allow approved fidget tools.
- Permit frequent water/toilet breaks without stigma.

Supporting Emotional Wellbeing

- Monitor self-esteem carefully – pupils may mask struggles with humour, avoidance, or anger.
- Teach emotional literacy (naming and recognising feelings).
- Normalise setbacks – emphasise “try again” approaches.
- Provide consistent routines – predictability reduces anxiety.
- Build positive peer relationships and celebrate individual strengths.

Useful Resources

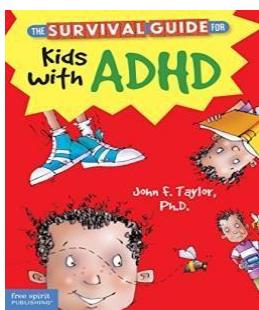
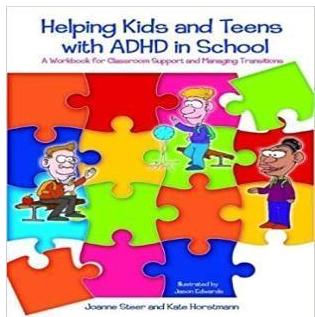
- NHS Guidance on ADHD: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/>
- ADHD Foundation: <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk>
- YoungMinds ADHD Support: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk>

Key Takeaway

Children with ADHD are not “naughty” or “lazy” – their brains process information differently. With the right **structures, strategies, and relationships**, they can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Staff consistency, patience, and understanding make the biggest difference.

Suggested Reading



Helping Kids and Teens with ADHD in School – Joanne Steer & Kate Horstmann

The Survival Guide for Kids with ADHD – John F Taylor

Managing ADHD in School – Russell Barkley

Understanding and Supporting Children with ADHD – Lesley Hughes & Paul Cooper