

**Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder  
(ADHD)**

**Strategies for teachers  
(Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1)**

## ***Oxfordshire protocol for the identification and assessment of pupils with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)***

### **A definition of Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder**

“Children and young persons whose behaviour appears impulsive, overactive and/or inattentive to an extent that it is unwarranted for their developmental age and is a significant hindrance to their social and educational success”. British Psychological Society (2000)

The main behavioural features of a child with ADHD are:

- **Inattentiveness**
- **Impulsivity**
- **Over-activity**

Various factors may contribute such as:

- Change and unpredictability in the child's life
- Specific learning difficulties which mean a child underachieves in school, loses interest and appears distractible.
- Severe co-ordination difficulties which lead children to avoid set tasks and perhaps show some difficult behaviours.
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder whereby communication and relationship difficulties interfere with learning and appropriate behaviour.
- Specific speech and language difficulties which lead to behaviours expressing a child's frustration.
- Hearing/vision impairment which is undetected and may underlie behaviour disturbance.
- Food intolerances may be exacerbating the degree of difficulties or / and nutritional deficiency
- Poisoning is rare, but poison such as lead affects a child's attention span.
- Tourette's Syndrome. Many of the features of this syndrome are similar but with associated family history, abnormal movements and poor emotional control.
- Physical disorders such as asthma may lead to behaviour problems due to poor sleep patterns and impaired attention.
- Epilepsy in some forms can present as periods of inattention and behavioural change.
- Conduct disorders.
- Neglectful or abusive early experiences.
- Emotional difficulties due to stress, anxiety, parental pressures, relationship problems, may be a cause of the presenting behaviours.

Children who are inattentive, impulsive, and overactive may be so for a variety of reasons. It is therefore, all the more important to be clear about how we understand a child's difficulties, what we contribute to the assessment/ monitoring processes, and the care with which we plan strategies to support a child.

ADHD is a medical diagnosis based on shared information from:

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- the parent/carer
- the child
- teachers/teaching assistants
- GP/consultant
- relevant outside agencies

It is helpful to look at how school, family and other agencies can work together to support the child.

### **A context of support**

- A key person in school to collate information and communicate with family and other agencies.
- Practical support strategies written in positive language for all staff working with the pupil.
- A realistic system of recording the pupil's behaviour which is clear and accessible.
- A system for communicating with the parents/carers and supporting their work at home with the pupil.
- A clear protocol in school for administering prescribed medication and monitoring its effects.
- A consensus about the specific patterns of behaviour for which the child needs support and guidance.

Caring for the carer. Teaching a pupil with ADHD is demanding, being both physically and emotionally draining. Ensure that there is support for the teacher and/or teaching assistant.

All of the above needs to be recorded and incorporated into the school's existing Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001). This is a staged process of support for children with special educational needs.

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## **The Learning Environment for Children with Attention Difficulties**

### **Organisational factors and the learning environment**

Use routines so that the day becomes predictable

Use visual cues and a visual timetable

Use small components (chunks) of learning

### **Learning activities:**

How do you check on whether the child is flitting from one thing to another? Help the nursery child stay at one play activity and extend range of play with active adult support. Present work in short chunks.

### **Seating:**

Where is the best place? *It would be really good to have you sitting here because you can do such good listening/ answer a special question - -*

Consider where the child actually manages to listen best. It may be at a table, or on a chair rather than on the floor.

### **Waiting:**

Minimize time waiting. Queues and lining up are difficult times. Ensure the child knows where s/he should be and has a regular place in the line. Turn taking is hard too so ensure the child has a visual reminder.

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## **Targets and strategies to help in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1**

### **The Foundation Stage**

We want children to be able to take advantage of the learning opportunities so we want them to:

1. listen,
2. pay attention,
3. focus on a task
4. work with others

What might we expect of children of four, five, six, seven and eight? The Foundation Stage Profile lists what a child should do:

- Show an interest through observation or participation
- Show a high level of involvement in self chosen activity
- Talk through an activity
- Listen and respond

### **Some examples for younger children, (Foundation stage 1-3)**

- To ask for my tidy up jobs and then do them
- To play with (adult first, then child supported by adult) – water play, sand play, construction, role play for 5 minutes
- To tell Y (friend) about my game
- To sit in group time for 5 minutes, watching the teacher (may need adult support – teaching assistant or teacher) and listening.
- To tell teaching assistant about someone else's news after group time or something in group time
- To answer a question in group time
- To tell the adult about the story
- To ask an adult what she's been doing and then tell another ( Mum, Dad, TA, Nan)

### **Key Stage 1**

In the case of an eight year old we would want much the same but for longer periods, and with a greater focus on:

1. listening and responding
2. on independent work
3. on taking greater account of others:
4. to start to self monitor

so the long-term outcomes to aim for would be

- to listen and respond in formal teaching situations (literacy and numeracy)
- to describe how s/he has done something
- to work independently at an activity
- to take responsibility for parts of own learning/ activity

How can these be translated into small achievable but meaningful targets?

### **Examples for older children**

- To be able to say what my group has to do in the literacy/numeracy activity session

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- To be able to tell someone what the first part of the lesson was about (e.g. book in literacy, adding/ number line in numeracy)
- To be able to listen quietly and answer questions for part of the whole class teaching time (5 minutes, 10 minutes)
- To finish a task, working with a friend on an activity for 10 minutes

### **Encouraging the child to develop some self monitoring strategies:(good practice for all children)**

Help them to develop self-monitoring questions by using similar questions in different situations. *How am I getting on? What have I heard? What have I answered? What have I understood? Not understood? What have I finished? Can I put a star on my target card for good listening? For good working? For finishing?*

### **General strategies to encourage listening and responding**

- Give the child time to think and answer. Don't rush them
- Try to be positioned on the same level as them – on the floor or at a table
- Eye contact or joint/ shared gaze
- Cue them in - use their name, possibly a light touch on the arm
- Be simple – short sentences and words. One bit of information or one question
- Use visual cues –pictures of nursery activities and the routines – play outside, drinks, lunch. Use objects especially for news, or talking about trips/activities. Puppets are useful and repetition of favourite stories
- Check to see if they have understood
- Be pleased when the child wants to tell you something or has shown good listening
- Hand round something for the talker (a key, shell, something special) so that when you have the object you talk.

### **General strategies to help behaviour**

#### **Targets, Rules and Reminders**

Targets should be achievable and the child needs to understand what they are and to have visual and verbal reminders. Rewards should be consistent and praise used frequently.

Keep rules really short and simple and based on class rules. Children are likely to forget them so prompts are useful. A visual reminder of the target on the desk and star or tick chart, the marble jar or whatever you like to use to remind the children about what you expect

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### **Positive support and encouraging relationships**

Comment on how good s/he is. Start the session with a positive comment and say why you're pleased. Encourage positive peer group relationships. Provide a friend or small group to work with – useful to vary the friend/ group.

Positive reinforcement at regular intervals from the teacher and TA

*How have you done so far this morning? Show me what you've been doing.*

Parental support in reinforcing what you're doing. *What did you like about the story? Who did you play with today? What games did you play?*

### **Other strategies**

- Positive management in praising the behaviour you want to promote and try to ignore low level negative or irritating behaviour
- Remember it will take time, to try and change something which is part of the child's behaviour pattern – 6 weeks or longer usually.
- Traffic light systems: child has the card next to them while working – green is OK, amber I might need help, red – I'm losing it
- Star charts: award a star for each time they achieve a target, or for each short successful session. 5 stars could be exchanged for a sun and so many suns get a reward. Remember that if the system is a daily one and the child has had a bad first session they will see there is little point in continuing – so make sure there's a way for them to earn back rewards in the next session.
- Child/ star of the day: everybody has a turn and it helps class identity and the feeling that all are valued in the class. Usually has some special privileges or jobs; you could consider a circle of positive behaviour during the day when everyone says something positive about the child.