

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

ADHD is characterised by inattentiveness, hyperactivity, and/or impulsivity. Children with ADHD may show more symptoms of inattentiveness or hyperactivity-impulsiveness, or they may show symptoms in both. The combination of the two may make it challenging for children to pay attention in school.

Learning problems are common in children with ADHD. Over 50% of children with ADHD also have a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia (reading, up to 32%), dysgraphia (written expression, up to 65%), or dyscalculia (mathematics, up to 30%).

Symptoms of ADHD that may be apparent at school

* **Inattentive symptoms:**
* Overlooks the details of school work
* Difficulties with following instructions
* Struggles with organisation
* Has trouble focusing when being spoken to
* Does not complete school work in a timely manner
* Avoids doing tasks that require great focus, such as homework
* Frequently loses track of items such as homework and possessions.
* **Hyperactive-impulsive symptoms:**
* Difficulty remaining in seat
* Often fidgeting or squirming
* Runs or climbs in the classroom
* Cannot play quietly
* Difficulties with being patient and waiting for own turn
* Overly talkative
* Blurts out a response before the other person has finished speaking
* Interrupts conversations or activities.

How might ADHD impact your child’s learning?

* **Children constantly need to move,** which may make it difficult for your child to sit still in the classroom for long periods of time. Children may miss out on important instructions and lessons because of needing to be out of their seat.
* **There are lots of distractions in the classroom** and it is rare to find a completely quiet moment. Children who have ADHD are easily distracted, so noises in the classroom such as chairs squeaking, fingers tapping, and voices in the hallway can make it difficult for children to hold their attention to the task they are meant to be doing.
* **Having difficulties in carrying their understanding to their schoolwork**. Children with ADHD do not usually have an issue with learning, but instead applying what they have learned or instructions to their schoolwork. This may result in difficulties completing homework or written tasks, struggling to turn work in on time, and failing tests.
* **Children may have challenges with filtering their thoughts** and choosing the right time to share them. Children who have ADHD tend to blurt out their thoughts before others are finished speaking. This can create issues with other classmates, such as during groupwork, and it may interrupt the teacher when they are giving instructions. This will affect both the child’s ability and the classes’ ability to hear instructions.
* **Children’s thoughts tend to drift**. ADHD affects a child’s learning by inhibiting their ability to hold focus. Not paying attention makes it difficult to remember what a teacher has said regarding lessons, assignments, and due dates. The child’s ability to learn material and complete homework may therefore suffer.
* **Fine motor control** is a common difficulty in children with ADHD. This means that note-taking is difficult for many children and handwriting can be hard to read.

Things that can help

* **Managing the need for movement** – help your child to learn to identify when they have the urge to move. If they are unable to move, providing ways of directing their movement whilst staying seated will remove the need to them to leave the classroom or be disruptive. You could see if your child could have a fidget toy or object at school, or a wiggle seat.
* **Support to improve focus** – at home, limit distractions by removing external noise and allow for regular breaks. You could speak with your child’s teacher to see if your child can be seated away from doors and distractions in the classroom, or if regular movement breaks can be provided throughout the day.
* **Helping children to communicate** – talk to your child’s teacher to help establish a plan that rewards good behaviour. Talk through a child’s behaviour with the child so that they can learn to understand what is acceptable, and identify their emotions.
* **Help improve organisation** – to help children keep track of due dates, teach them to use a homework diary. Have the teacher initial next to the date at the end of each day to ensure children aren’t missing anything.
* **Handling stressful thoughts** – children’s self-esteem can be impacted if they feel like they are failing in their school work. Parents and teachers can use positive reinforcements and help to build children’s self-awareness to combat this. Helping a child to learn to think positive thoughts during moments of high stress may also help to minimize the way their ADHD impacts their learning.
* **Have effective communication channels** – effective communication between home and school is important for children’s success. It allows for structure in the areas the child spends most of their time in. Parents and teachers can work as a team to implement strategies, language, and rewards to encourage consistency for the child.

Useful links and resources

* **Understood** – A resource with lots of useful information about ADHD and how it can impact learning.
* [www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/add-adhd/what-is-adhd](http://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/add-adhd/what-is-adhd)
* [www.understood.org/en/community-events/blogs/expert-corner/2016/08/31/early-adhd-diagnosis-dont-forget-about-learning-differences](http://www.understood.org/en/community-events/blogs/expert-corner/2016/08/31/early-adhd-diagnosis-dont-forget-about-learning-differences)
* **Young Minds** – Resources with information about ADHD and how to support children living with ADHD, with further links to other organisations that support families who have children with ADHD.
* [www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/adhd-and-mental-health/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/adhd-and-mental-health/)
* [www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-adhd/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-adhd/)
* **Mind** – A resource with lots of information about ADHD.
* [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/adhd-and-mental-health/](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/adhd-and-mental-health/)
* **Royal College of Psychiatrists** – Information for parents, carers, and people who work with children with ADHD.
* [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/information-for-parents-and-carers/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-and-hyperkinetic-disorder-information-for-parents-carers-and-anyone-working-with-young-people](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/information-for-parents-and-carers/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-and-hyperkinetic-disorder-information-for-parents-carers-and-anyone-working-with-young-people)

Telephone numbers

* **Front Door Children’s Services –** If you have any concerns about being able to keep any of your children safe. Tel. 0345 2000 109.
* **Care and Connect –** A service for individuals, families, children and young people in North Tyneside which provides advice and support to stay independent and connected with the community. Support is provided by telephone or face to face in community settings. Tel. 0191 643 7474.
* Website – [www.services.northtyneside.gov.uk/sign/Public.Provider.aspx?ID=4](http://www.services.northtyneside.gov.uk/sign/Public.Provider.aspx?ID=4)