

# INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



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## The Impact on Learning for pupils living with ADHD

The characteristic of ADHD will often have a major impact on a pupil's ability to learn facts and develop skills. This will mean they may often fall behind in their learning, and this can in turn affect social and emotional well-being as well as educational outcomes.

Unrecognised or unmanaged ADHD in school can lead to challenging or disruptive behaviour, leading to fixed term and possibly permanent school exclusion. The disruption caused by unmanaged ADHD may also have an impact on behaviour and outcomes for the whole class.

Having ADHD does not reflect an individual's intelligence, but it does mean that ability to learn can be inconsistent which will have a negative impact a pupil's learning. For this reason, it's very important that teachers and schools have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with ADHD. This will enable them to support the pupils more effectively and help them to manage their ADHD characteristics so that they can better access their education.

In addition, there are other related **specific learning difficulties**, such as dyslexia or dyscalculia which are often co-morbid with ADHD, and can cause problems with reading, spelling and maths.

Studies have shown that pupils with ADHD showed constant and persistent academic difficulties compared to those without ADHD. These difficulties often resulted in lower than average marks or failed grades, more school exclusions, increased dropout rates and a lower rate of college or further education take-up\*.

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. Organisation of work and assignments can be very challenging for a pupil with ADHD. Impulsivity can result in calling out in class (and other disruptive behaviours), and also starting 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. Hyperactivity is often expressed in restlessness and pupils can be very distracted by their need to move if their movement is restricted. Introducing 'allowed movement' can be a very helpful to relieve this pressure. Their hyperactivity can be displayed in both physical and verbal behaviour and this can make pupils more susceptible to school exclusions, if it is not understood or managed effectively.

Pupils with ADHD will also commonly have difficulties with executive function which affect their ability to sequence and to organise effectively. They might speed through assignments without giving the necessary care and attention. 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 reflection of work can also be a challenge for pupils 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.

\* Weiss and Hechtman as cited in Johnson, 2002; Ingersoll, 1988.

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