

## Attention Deficit Disorder

The use of the terms ADD and ADHD have increased in recent years. Increased diagnosis by doctors and child psychiatrists means that we are increasingly likely to teach pupils who have this diagnosis and may be on medication as a result.

The term was first used in America in the 1980s to describe a syndrome observed in children with characteristics such as inattention, distractibility impulsiveness. In this country it is commonly referred to as hyperactivity.

When hyperactivity is not one of the characteristics the disorder is simply referred to as ADD – Attention Deficit Disorder.

Common symptoms are:

- **Inattention** – the pupil may fidget, is careless, fails to listen, does not complete tasks does not follow instructions, forgets daily routines, loses equipment, is easily distracted.

- **Hyperactivity** – the pupil is constantly ‘on the go’, frequently out of seat, wandering around the room, finds quiet activities difficult.
- **Impulsivity** – The pupil will speak out of turn, interrupts others, finds it difficult to wait their turn.

N.B. Children with these difficulties often also have specific learning difficulties and can also be clumsy.

## **Strategies for pupils with ADHD**

### **1. Create a calm environment**

- Underplay behaviour that is irritating but unimportant
- React calmly to incidents
- Avoid signs of exasperation when repeating instructions

### **2. Have routines;**

- Be planned and as predictable as possible
- Discipline of pupils with ADHD should follow a clearly defined format
- If possible prepare the pupils before giving a new task so that he/she is not alarmed by its unfamiliarity
- Specify clear expected outcomes and rewards

### **3. Communicate clearly:**

- Address inattention with a quiet but clear and firm reminder of expectations

- Give simple, clear and specific instructions which are clearly focused on the desired outcome e.g. 'finish reading page 5' rather than 'get on with your work.'
- Give tasks in small steps with regular reminders
- Seat the pupil towards the front of the classroom

### **3. Protect the pupil's self esteem:**

- Praise and reward frequently
- Put the emphasis of lesson targets on academic achievement / completion of specific tasks rather than on behavioural issues
- Always focus on positive, desirable outcomes rather than on negative, unwanted behaviour

## Asperger's Syndrome

Asperger's Syndrome is an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) affecting all aspects of development. Pupils with this disorder have impairments of language development, social communication problems and imagination / flexible thought difficulties.

Additional clinical features of Asperger's Syndrome may include;

- ❑ Lack of empathy
- ❑ Naïve, inappropriate, one-sided interaction
- ❑ Poor ability to perform and sustain friendships
- ❑ Pedantic or repetitive speech
- ❑ Poor non-verbal communication
- ❑ Intense absorption in certain subjects
- ❑ Clumsy and ill co-ordinated movements and odd postures

Problems faced by pupils with Asperger's Syndrome in school;

- ❑ Poor ability to focus on relevant stimuli
- ❑ Inability to cope with academic and social demands
- ❑ Inability to be tactful about others
- ❑ Difficulty in organising self and belongings
- ❑ Frustration caused by inability to express their thoughts
- ❑ Difficulty coping with the knowledge that they are 'different' but not being able to change
- ❑ A narrow range of interests may mean that areas of the curriculum are a mystery
- ❑ Good skills in some areas may mask deficits in others

## **Strategies to support pupils with Asperger's Syndrome**

- The written word is not usually as ambiguous as spoken language. Writing down lists of instructions and messages can help.
- Use visual props – pictures and actual objects – to help get the message across. Concrete images help children who have difficulty with ambiguity. Whilst many children can use their imagination to write a story, a child with Aspergers may be helped by being asked to describe photographs of real events
- Use small steps – instructions broken down into short, clear and concise chunks are easier to follow
- Allow more time for the pupil to think through and process what he has heard before responding
- Be flexible – remember the autistic way of thinking is different and you may need to structure things differently in order to help pupils succeed at tasks
- Routines and predictability are important. Give clear information on any changes to the timetable or routines. If lessons or staff are changed, explain this in advance
- Be careful with your use of language – pupils with Aspergers will take everything literally
- Be prepared to accept that what may appear to be a refusal to cooperate is not calculated disobedience – pupils with Aspergers are driven by rules which make sense to them but not to anyone else
- Be prepared to give additional support during unstructured times or out-of-school activities
- Give plenty of praise to help boost self esteem – especially in front of other pupils

## **Dyspraxia**

Developmental dyspraxia is an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement.

It is an immaturity in the way that the brain processes information, which results in messages not being properly or fully transmitted.

Dyspraxia affects the planning of what to do and how to do it. It is associated with problems of perception, language and thought.

Other names for dyspraxia include Developmental Co-ordination Disorder, Perceptuo-Motor Dysfunction, and Motor Learning Difficulties. It used to also be referred to as Clumsy Child Syndrome.

Statistically it is likely that there is one child with dyspraxia in every class of thirty pupils

Dyspraxia may be characterised by

- ❑ Gross and fine motor skills difficulties
- ❑ Difficulties with reading and spelling
- ❑ Limited concentration
- ❑ Poor listening skills
- ❑ Literal use of language which may have an effect on reading and spelling ability
- ❑ Limited understanding of language concepts – this may affect reading, comprehension and receptive language
- ❑ Articulation difficulties

- ❑ Lack of self-confidence
- ❑ Poor handwriting

## Strategies to support pupils with Dyspraxia

- ❑ **Assistance/extra time for activities involving gross/fine motor skills e.g. changing for PE. Experiments in science**
- ❑ **Ensure that the pupil is listening and has understood instructions and information**
- ❑ **Prompt quietly if the pupil is off task**
- ❑ **Give assistance with personal organisation**
- ❑ **Break tasks down into small steps and give frequent reminders of the stages**
- ❑ **Provide subject key word spelling lists if spelling is a problem**
- ❑ **Avoid asking the pupil to read aloud unless he/she volunteers to do so**
- ❑ **Provide access to ICT if appropriate**
- ❑ **Avoid commenting about the pupil's handwriting or work – presentation – judge them only against their own best efforts**
- ❑ **Boost self-esteem**