

## Resource 20: Classroom strategies

### Systems and structure

- Pupils with ADHD do not deal with change well, so any new activities or changes to the room or schedule need to be carefully planned. You need to think through any change in advance and set aside some time to prepare the ADHD pupil.
- ADHD pupils do best in structured classrooms. You should clearly communicate your rules and expectations, and make sure academic tasks are easily managed and clear.
- Ensure that a positive behaviour management system is in place.
- Try to limit open spaces in the classroom – they can encourage unwanted hyperactivity such as running.
- Surround ADHD pupils with good role models if you can. These should be pupils who have good attention, are successful within the classroom and who are popular with others. Encourage peer mentoring and cooperative and collaborative learning. (Note: try to spread the mentoring role around to prevent one or two pupils ending up with a high level of responsibility for an ADHD child. This also applies in other cases of pupils with special educational needs in a mainstream classroom.)

### Helping them to follow instructions

- Use their name to gain their attention and make sure they're looking at you before you give an instruction.
- Simplify complicated instructions. Break any long instructions down into small chunks or steps.
- Be consistent with daily routines.
- Make sure the pupil understands what s/he needs to do before beginning a task. Ask him/her, or another pupil, to repeat what's going to happen. Use this strategy with all pupils, not just those with ADHD.
- Provide prompts and signposts to help keep the child on task – these may be verbal or non-verbal. The use of non-verbal signs or prompts encourages ADHD pupils to begin to take responsibility for managing their own behaviour.
- Make sure pupils feel confident about asking for help. Your classroom should be one in which teaching and learning is a two-way process, where pupils are encouraged to seek help or clarification. Children with ADHD are often reluctant to do this.

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### **Keeping their attention**

- Seat pupils with ADHD near to the teacher's desk, but still in the usual class seating plan.
- Reduce the potential for distraction by seating ADHD pupils facing forward with their backs to the rest of the class, rather than in a group seating arrangement.
- Position ADHD pupils away from other distracting stimuli such as windows, doors and heaters.
- Create a 'distraction-free workspace' in the classroom – let your ADHD pupils work in this area when they need to. This will help them begin to manage their own environment. Younger pupils will obviously need more guidance about when to use the study area than older pupils.
- Also allow other pupils to use the distraction-free workspace to help reduce the sense of the procedure being different for ADHD pupils.

### **Help the pupils learn to organise homework**

- Help the pupils to use a homework diary or equivalent.
- List homework assignments with due dates.
- Remind the ADHD pupils to consult their notebook at the end of the day to make sure they take home what they need.

### **Focus on success**

- Reduce written class work and homework to match the limits of ability and attention.
- Focus on the content of written work, rather than untidiness or spelling mistakes.
- Think about setting tests without a strict time limit.
- Provide the type of feedback that will reinforce positive behaviours (eg, star charts).
- Give ADHD pupils confidence by starting each session with a few questions or activities which will guarantee their success.

### **Help the pupil control his or her impulses**

- Remind the pupil to slow down when completing answers.
- Encourage the pupil to recheck his or her answers before handing work in.

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### **Maintain self-esteem**

- Encourage performance in a pupil's area of strength.
- Provide feedback privately.
- Do not ask a pupil to perform a task publicly, if it may prove too difficult.
- Focus on positive reinforcement rather than negative responses.

### **Design a specific behaviour programme**

- Target a few behaviours specific to the ADHD pupil.
- Develop a private non-verbal system for letting a pupil know that his or her behaviour is unacceptable.
- Use a similar system to give positive feedback for appropriate behaviours.