



360 Treatment Tools & Tips

An ADHD 360 3T's paper

Want better school results?
Help the school to help your child with ADHD

Background to ADHD in the school

ADHD is frequently mis-diagnosed and considered, wrongly, to be a “naughty child” syndrome”, this is far from the case. Many pupils are suffering as a consequence of these thoughts, and for many the classroom setting is a place of great heartache, severe anxiety and is a cause of mental ill-health.

Generally speaking we believe the following statement should be the ‘mantra’ of all parents and teachers:

Children with ADHD do not have “learning difficulties”, they have “difficulties learning”, the two concepts are completely different.

This 3T's paper is focused on helping parents and guardians of a child with ADHD advocate for their child as effectively as they can. Being an advocate, when you feel you are pushing against a system can be tough, we have written this paper building on our many years of experience, with that experience coming from the classroom, the clinic and from conversations with the families we treat daily.

In this paper you will find some Top Tips and also some criteria for you to present to the school in the form of ‘Reasonable Adjustments’ that we know work for children with ADHD.

Help the teacher to help you

The schoolteacher has a wonderful job, a role that helps to shape future society. They have challenges and pressures every day, so perhaps it is appropriate to see how we can help them understand our child? If we advocate effectively, the teacher stands a greater chance of meeting everyone's needs. So, what do we mean?

First of all, we need to 'advocate from our head not our heart'. If the first time we meet the teacher is when our child is in trouble at school we are likely to be emotional, and this will effect how we communicate.



So let's plan ahead and use these simple Top Tips to form a letter or an email for the teacher(s).

- We must tell the school that our child has a diagnosis of ADHD. By telling school that we are drawing attention to the fact they have extra responsibilities.
- Your child will have strengths, things they do well, we need to let the teacher know of these strengths.
- Your child will also have areas where there are challenges: focus, attention, blurting out, the list is perhaps long, but we need to acknowledge these to allow school to make adjustments that are reasonable, we will come back to those later on.
- Your child will be passionate about something, and good at anything connected to it. Maybe football, baking, sketching, it doesn't matter what it is, but it is important we recognise this. It is called the 'island of competence' and it is important we work out what this is.

- Your child will also develop coping mechanisms to manage their ADHD based struggles, so we need to let the teacher know what these are. The following examples illustrate what we mean:

Billi was asking to go to the toilet about three times every lesson and was sent to the school nurse as a result.

There was a thought that she had a urinary infection. She didn't. Each time she knew she had lost track of the lesson but suspected she was about to be asked a question, she left the room for the loo.

In her mind it was far better than being 'made to look an idiot'.

Similarly, **Charlie** was renowned for losing his temper in his maths class, he even threw a stool across the room once, which earned him a detention.

It ends up that he struggled with maths, he just couldn't see the numbers. This frustrated him and put him under pressure, he couldn't understand why the girl sitting next to him could do her 11 times table and he couldn't.

As his frustration grew, so did his stress. The stress placed his brain, especially his executive functioning, under more pressure, and in the end, just like a kettle, he blew off steam in an inappropriate way. It's predictably inevitable.

- We also need to work out what type of pupil our child is:
 - Are they one that likes being sociable, enjoys the challenge of being with peers?
 - Or they prefer the quietness of solitude to work out problems and do their work?
 - Lockdown for Covid-19 gave us a great insight into our children's approach. In the clinic we found this to be literally a split 50:50. Half of our young patients thrived off lockdown, being free from peer pressure, that stress of being caught not concentrating had gone, and they could learn as they needed to. The other half floundered, couldn't get motivated, couldn't start their work without someone directing them and reducing their procrastination.
 - So your letter to school needs to include a short review of what type of learner your child is, and think back to 'Lockdown' to help you work it out.

Your Letter to School



- Confirm the diagnosis
- List our child's strengths
- Detail our child's challenges
- Identify the 'island of competence'
- Work out and discuss their coping mechanisms
- Highlight the type of learner you find them to be, Type A (isolated) or Type B (socially based)
- **And remember to send this letter 'from your head not your heart' and do this as early as you can in the school year**

Reasonable adjustments – a guide for school

We can achieve a lot for a child with ADHD if we put some simple things into place. We should look to see what works for them, and even if it does mean doing something we haven't done before, try it, let's see!

The many distractions, opportunities for the mind to wonder and a setting where the brightest child can hide and pass for 'average' also builds anxiety and reduces self-esteem. The considerations we outline in this paper are specifically offered with professional, medical consideration to a child with ADHD's needs, and we would encourage you to put these into place.



Recommended reasonable adjustments in the pupil's exam setting:

1. In exams the student should be in a separate room, anything less than this provides external and distracting stimulus that will prevent the student achieving their potential in the exam in question.
2. Give instructions when you know they are listening – they may not give you good eye contact, which is ok, but check they are listening, they will find this difficult, and the instructions will need re-enforcing.
3. Children with ADHD require extra time in exams, this is an indisputable fact, and anything less than an adequate provision is setting the child up to fail. Students with ADHD struggle to conceptually manage time, and as well as an extra provision, regular updates on time and / or a specific ADHD relevant time management clock should be provided.

4. You should target to provide 25% more time in exams.
5. Exams should be targeted in the period of the day when the student's medication is optimal, this is rarely the first or last thing in the day. If you are not aware of the efficacy of the student's medication, please consult with the family, or notify us and we will furnish you with this information.
6. Use proximity – the student should be at the front of the class, closest to the teacher, and if another child is present in the exam room, they should preferably be a child who remains on task and is quiet and less distracting.
7. The supervising teacher should be prepared to recognise when the student's mind has wandered and bring them back to the task, in a manner conducive to bringing out the best in them.



Recommended reasonable adjustments in the classroom setting:

In the non-exam setting, we would recommend the following protocols are in place for any student with ADHD:

1. Deliberately and frequently, bring the student back on track regularly, this should be an encouragement, and should not single out any student for embarrassment or inappropriate isolation.
2. Minimise distractions - try and avoid seating next to a window, a door or near the bookshelf/equipment area, where children often visit and chatter, or where they have visual distractions.
3. A visual timetable will be very effective, colour coding books to lessons also has a positive effect on organisation skills and avoids lost or forgotten books or other study materials.

4. Provide additional time to finish class work, the student will have spent some of the lesson distracted. This will help build confidence and self-esteem, they should still get breaks and social time at school, even though work may be incomplete. Not completing work should not be a punishment, nor should it be seen as one.
5. Ascertain and confirm the students understanding of the task, rather than saying 'do you know what to do?' This will give a clearer idea of how much of the instruction they managed to pay attention to.
6. Allow additional, regular breaks facilitating the student to refocus, which in turn will help fatigue, focusing of the mind and concentration. It is important to remember that a short break to refocus and alter the immediate brain chemistry, whilst a loss of immediate contact time, will give more focus on return and therefore be beneficial in terms of contact time and associated results.
7. Students with ADHD can literally become lost during transition from lessons, due to them being easily distracted or not focused on the immediate task. They require assistance getting changed for PE or moving through school from lesson to lesson. A mentor, or colour coded routes can help with this.
8. Above all else, the accommodation that will have most benefit for students with ADHD is for their failings to be seen as challenges they are striving to overcome. Unlike neurotypical children, children with ADHD will probably not be making a choice to falter, this will be a symptom of their impairment. Protecting an already vulnerable self-esteem is paramount to guarantee future engagement in social activities and good education.
9. Have a secret signal for the child to tell you they are overwhelmed, we recommend a card, red on one side and green on the other in a clear pencil case. All that has to happen is the child turns it over to the relevant colour as a message to the teacher...simple!



ADHD 360 Mobile & Desktop App

The ADHD 360 app is designed to help you keep yourself and your clinical team up to date with your ADHD symptoms and includes many useful tools.

It's free on the Apple App Store for mobile and desktop.



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