



Practical
skills for
teachers

The Essential Guide to
Understanding
Special
Educational Needs

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The Essential Guide to Understanding Special Educational Needs

way of managing the individual behaviours of the child?’ I would like to draw on my own experience regarding this controversial issue to demonstrate the reality of the situation.

Why not try this?

In view of these research findings, what are your opinions on using Ritalin to control the inappropriate behaviours of individuals who have ADHD? Consider the side effects of Ritalin and its usefulness in providing effective treatment of ADHD.

Reflecting on practice



While recently teaching a pupil with ADHD, my ultimate goal was to ensure that I implemented strategies for preventing and managing inappropriate behaviour and promoted positive behaviour in the classroom. Ben was taking Ritalin on a daily basis, and although the ‘quick fix’ was apparent when he had just taken the medication, it was also apparent that when the effects of the drug were wearing off Ben found it very hard to work in a classroom situation as the ADHD symptoms seemed to be exacerbated during this period.

At these times, Ben’s behaviour became very aggressive and had a profound effect both on himself and the remainder of the pupils in the class. He would often pick up a chair and throw it across the room and resort to very aggressive behaviour towards both staff and other pupils. The only time this behaviour did not occur was when he was involved in sporting activities as this was something that particularly motivated him.

In cases like Ben’s it is important to realise that the ultimate goals of intervention for pupils with ADHD are not just to control the symptoms, but to ensure that the individual needs of the pupil are understood and met in order to facilitate educational progress in a meaningful way that will be of maximum benefit to the individual. Strategies for meeting the needs of pupils with ADHD will be addressed later in this chapter.

Identifying ADHD in the classroom

In your career you will inevitably come across a child with the symptoms of ADHD. In the classroom, there may be two children who always pay attention to someone or something they shouldn’t be, they are easily distracted and never stay on task for more than a few minutes, often fidgeting and moving around in search of distraction. Some children with ADHD may be able to pay attention for a

short time, but this is intermittent unless the child is very interested in the subject area, whereas other ADHD children may not be able to pay attention to one thing at one time and may become very easily distracted.

These children often shout out in class and other children can feel very intimidated by their actions. This was true of a pupil with ADHD who I taught recently. She would talk above everyone else in the class, and if another pupil was asked to answer a question she would immediately shout out the answer. She rarely considered the consequences prior to taking action, which often caused problems as she would strike another child without thinking about the consequences; and she needed constant reassurance regarding her work and behaviour in order to ensure she reacted in a positive way.

Reflecting on practice



Charles continually bumps into children accidentally and yesterday a child was elbowed and became very upset as a result. The teacher explained to Charles that this behaviour was not acceptable, by telling Charles how the other child feels. The teacher did this by saying 'I will say it first, then you can say it. I don't like it when you hit me like that, it hurt.' Charles repeated the words and the other child involved then apologised too. Following this intervention, the children became friends again.

Consider the following:

1. Have you come across children like Charles in your class?
2. How have you reacted to this child?
3. How do you feel you could deal with the situation differently to produce a positive working environment?

A child with ADHD may also display extreme reactions when sad, happy, excited, and will constantly be seeking positive reinforcement for any work they are doing. An example of extreme reaction may be when the child with ADHD blurts out the answers all the time as a way of seeking attention. In order to overcome this problem, positive reinforcement is the best behavioural management strategy to use to build the confidence of a child with ADHD. The teacher/practitioner may recognise and praise specific instances when the child carries out a task correctly:

'I like the way Keely remembers to put her hand up and waits to be called on. Thank you, Keely.'

This will reinforce the good behaviour of the child and also raise their self-esteem when they recognise they are doing what is expected of them.

Children who have ADHD predominantly have trouble staying on task, staying seated, and many may be immature developmentally, educationally and/or socially. When working with pupils with ADHD it is important to recognise that they find it very difficult to sit still for long periods of time.

TOP TIP!

When working with a child who displays signs of ADHD you may find it more appropriate to let the pupil wander around the classroom in a controlled way wherever possible, as by restricting the pupil you will only add to their anxiety level.



Top tips for identifying ADHD

- Can the child pay attention in class?
- Is the child impulsive? Does he/she call out in class? Does he/she bother other children with his/her impulsiveness?
- Does the child have trouble staying seated?
- Does the child often get in fights?
- Can the child wait his/her turn in a line, or to answer a question?
- Is the child calm?
- Does the child stay on task well or does he/she fidget a lot?
- Does the child lack awareness of personal space?
- Does the child seem to be immature developmentally, educationally or socially?

UsefulWebsite

<http://www.adhd.org.uk/>

This is an excellent website for ADHD – specifically for getting ideas about how to manage the condition. There is detailed information about ADHD and the treatment used to overcome problems faced by the individual with ADHD. There are also personal stories written by people with ADHD.



TOP TIP!

If you suspect that a child has ADHD it may be a good idea to note down each time the behaviour discussed here occurs, how often it occurs and what the circumstances are. This will enable you to form a clear picture of the child and identify whether the child needs referral to a specialist in order for diagnosis to take place.

**UsefulWebsite**

http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/3724/SENCodeOfPractice.pdf

This website offers a comprehensive guide to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001, which you will find useful when working with pupils who you suspect have special educational needs. This website offers practical advice to local authorities on carrying out their statutory duties to identify, assess and make provision for children's special educational needs.



Pupils with ADHD in mainstream and special needs schools

As outlined in Chapter 2, under the terms of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, all children between the ages of 4 and 19 in the UK have the right to be educated in a mainstream school regardless of special educational needs or disabilities. In reality this is not the case: approximately 7 per cent of children are educated in the private sector; 2 per cent of children being educated in specialist provision, including special schools and pupil referral units, young offenders' institutions and medical facilities (Hughes and Cooper, 2007, p40).

Children with ADHD should have the opportunity to reach their maximum potential, and thus should be given a choice of educational setting in order that they may engage actively and constructively in the social and academic life of the institution. If the mainstream school is able to meet the needs of the child who has ADHD, this is considered appropriate; however, alternative methods such as special schools may be preferred. Hughes and Cooper (2007) advocate that effective education relies heavily on the setting in which the student is learning and is dependent on their social, emotional and learning needs being met.

Failure to meet these needs may result in the child suffering from social exclusion, and in turn may affect their academic achievement. It is important to recognise that if the pupil is being taught in a mainstream environment, all staff need to

be aware of what strategies are in place in order to provide consistency for the pupil, as failure to do this will only exacerbate the difficulties faced by the pupil even further.

Factors to consider when working with pupils with ADHD

When working with pupils with ADHD, there are many factors to consider:

- Training and knowledge about ADHD – Teachers need to be aware that children with ADHD are not ‘naughty children’ and their actions are not directed at teachers personally. The behaviours displayed are a result of physiological and biological deficiencies. It is important to gain an understanding of the condition in order that the challenging behaviours are dealt with in an appropriate way.
- Communication between home and school – Regular and effective communication is of paramount importance in order that a good relationship is established between parents and school. This will highlight any issues that arise and may reduce the risk of further problems.
- You need to ensure a clear and structured approach:
 - The pupil with ADHD needs to have a structured approach in order to minimise disruption.
 - They need clear communication, expectations, consequences and feedback.
 - When structuring tasks, consideration should be given to the length of time the task will take, and the need for breaking the task into sizeable chunks.
 - Clear instructions are essential in order that the child with ADHD does not become anxious.
 - The tasks set need to be of interest to the child in order that they do not become bored and, as a result, disruptive.
- Teacher–pupil engagement with tasks:
 - Tasks set need to involve the children with ADHD interacting with their peers, in order to keep them engaged and motivated. An example of good practice would be to involve the child in choosing a game to play with a friend, or using the computer with a friend at break time.
 - Giving the child who has ADHD a responsibility, such as classroom monitor (tidying up books and resources) assists in keeping their attention, as they have a sense of purpose. Provide opportunities for children to demonstrate their strengths to peers.

Top tips for teachers/practitioners

- Understand that not all children with ADHD are hyperactive.
- Don't dismiss the behaviours as poor parenting or poor classroom management.
- Communicate with parents face to face to gain a better understanding of the needs of the child with ADHD.
- Be aware that the child who has ADHD works very well in a one-to-one situation.
- Be aware of the classroom environment; there are many distractions, and rules that may be very difficult for the child with ADHD.

A framework for collaborative working

In order to meet the social, emotional and academic needs of the child with ADHD it is imperative that professionals and parents work together to provide effective strategies to support the child. Burrows and Tamblyn (1980, cited in Hughes and Cooper, 2007) identify a problem-based model, which seeks to encourage a collaborative approach to problem solving (see Figure 3.1).

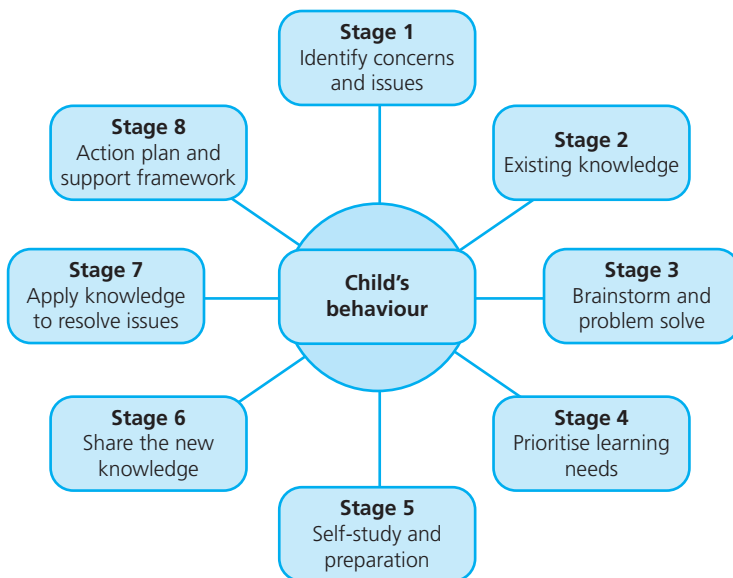


Fig 3.1: The eight-stage problem-based model (Burrows and Tamblyn, 1980, cited Hughes and Cooper, 2007, p61)