

Touch Primary School



Supporting ADHD/ASD
Home Learning Toolkit

What is in this toolkit?



This toolkit provides a range of suggested supports to help children with ADHD and ASD while learning at home. The toolkit can be used for reference and covers supporting learning at home. If you have any further questions, please get in touch with the Touch Support for Learning Team.

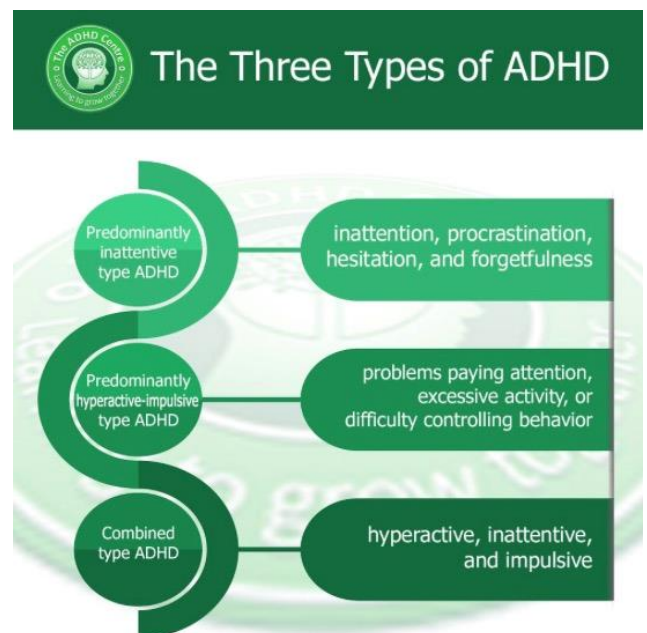
What Is ADHD?

At times, all children have trouble paying attention, listening, sitting still, or waiting their turn. However, children with ADHD have trouble with these things almost all of the time.

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. This is the medical term for difficulties with attention, impulsivity and self-regulation. ADHD can mean that young people have a difficult time staying focused. They may also appear more fidgety and struggle to control impulsive behaviours.

No two people with ADHD are the same, everyone has their own strengths and difficulties. There are different types of ADHD:

- Inattentive ADHD
- Hyperactive - Impulsive ADHD
- Combined ADHD



What Are the Difficulties Associated With ADHD?

Children with ADHD might:

- have trouble listening and paying attention
- need lots of reminders to do things
- get distracted easily
- seem absent-minded
- be disorganised and lose things
- not sit still, wait their turn, or be patient
- rush through homework or other tasks or make careless mistakes
- interrupt a lot, talk or call out in class. Even when they understand it is not appropriate, they cannot control the impulsive behaviour.
- feel restless, fidgety, frustrated, and bored

Super Strengths of ADHD

Creativity - A mind that is forever thinking and creating. ADHD brains naturally think outside of the box. They thrive in environments that demand creative thinking.

Innovation - At times children with ADHD can get bored easily, however feelings of boredom can lead to innovative thoughts and ideas.

Hyper focus - children can become engrossed in chosen topics they are enthusiastic about; they are experts and can persevere with problem solving.

High energy - children with ADHD have the fuel to keep going, when channelled correctly this can lead to goals being achieved.

Productivity - alongside high energy and hyper focus children can become productive at a breath-taking pace.

Resilience - children with ADHD are masters of resilience, they can push past setbacks and adapt new strategies to move past difficulties.

What Is ASD?

ASD stands for Autism Spectrum Disorder. Autism is a lifelong neuro-developmental difference. This means it is a condition that affects the development of the brain. Autism affects the way a person communicates and interacts with others, how information is processed and how the person makes sense of the world.

No two people with Autism are the same and autism presents differently from person to person. For children and young people, there is a reciprocal relationship between them and the environment - this includes the physical environment and the people around them. With appropriate understanding and adjustments children with Autism can flourish.

Autism can occur with other conditions such as:

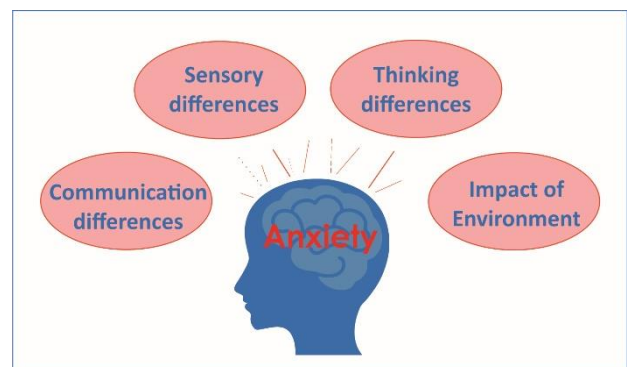
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) also referred to as Dyspraxia, Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and Specific Learning Difficulty/ Differences e.g. Dyslexia, Dyscalculia.



What Are the Difficulties Associated With ASD?

What is core to Autism?

- Communication differences
- Sensory differences
- Thinking difference
- Impact of Environment



When the above four aspects are not supported appropriately this will lead to increased anxiety for the child person.

Social Differences:

Children with ASD might:

- be unable to join in play with other children or have a tendency join in inappropriately (disrupt, take over, appear aggressive).
- have a lack of awareness of classroom 'norms' (unwilling to join in activities, answering back to adults, following rules or routines when accessing areas).
- be overwhelmed by social situations and other stimulation such as noise.
- have a lack of flexible cooperative imaginative play/creativity.
- find it difficult to manage their behaviour in an unstructured space such as the playground or hall.
- be unable to cope with change (routine, different teacher, etc.).
- Find unstructured situations such as a school trip stressful.

Supporting Social Interactions

Understanding Emotions

Many children with autism will have an emotional vocabulary of happy, sad and angry. Start with those and then branch out to other feelings such as surprised, confused.

- Children often respond to tangible concepts so once you've come up with a list of feelings, you could categorise and colour code the list. Write negative feelings in red and positive ones in green.
- Make biscuits with faces on them using icing/sweets/dried fruit. Discuss the different parts of the face, make different expressions, copy them, mirror to each other, talk about situations where you have made that expression or seen your child make that expression.

- Art activity, making faces on paper plates, puppets, masks, face painting, drawing faces on flat surfaces using finger paints or shaving foam.
- Cartoons are a great resource when it comes to teaching facial expressions as they are very over exaggerated. Watch an episode of a cartoon together and pause at appropriate spots, talk through, copy facial expressions, see if you can predict what will happen next.
- Take photos of you and your child or other people making a certain facial expression and get them to see the similarities in how their faces work. This will help with generalisation. Or print off photos and use them in a matching card game such as snap.

Entering games/situations

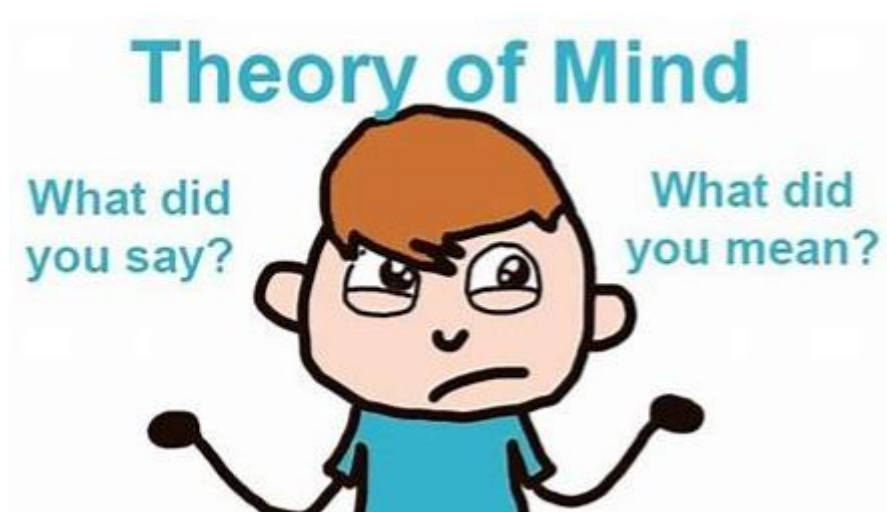
Make sure your child actually knows what a 'game' is. It is important they understand that in many games there will be a winner and a loser.

- Explain to your child how it is useful to choose children who might be compatible playmates with similar interests. For example, if your child wants to talk about football - choose a child playing football, rather than a child who is reading a book or playing with a computer game.
- Teach your child a script that they can say if they want to play with someone and rehearse it with them. Make sure you practise alternative endings, eg what to do if they say no.

Theory of mind

Children with autism can find it difficult to understand how others may be feeling and that their beliefs, interests and experiences may be different to their own. This is where a lot of children can face conflict and where inappropriate behaviours begin. Many autistic people can struggle with others coming to different conclusions or 'agreeing to disagree'. It may not be possible to teach your child to actually understand another person's point of view - the main goal early on is to get them to recognise that it may just be different and accept that.

- You could do this by asking your child to compare a picture of a sibling or other family member with themselves and talking about how the two are different. You can discuss the physical differences then gradually move on to more abstract differences in line with how much the child understands.
- Discuss everyday experiences that show people making choices and highlight them to your child. For example when picking out clothes, food preferences, choice of film/TV programme.



Conversational skills/turn taking

Conversations are not predictable and involve an immediate response. This is why many autistic people avoid conversations with their peers and will often talk to adults or children much older or younger than themselves.

- Using a 'talking stick' that someone must be holding to have their turn at speaking, and timers to indicate the end of their turn.
- Board games can help to teach turn-taking, as they are visual, and have real things that show that it's your turn (eg dice, counters).
- Use pictures of people and draw blank speech bubbles. The child needs to use their observation skills to establish what the context is and work out what they might be saying or thinking.
- Game - 'never ending story'. One person starts and says one word only such as one, the next person says another word such as "day", and you keep going between yourselves adding one word at a time. This requires the both of you to listen to what the other person has said and tailor your response to keep the story going. These stories can end up being very silly and fun - but they can help to develop listening skills.



Communication Differences:

Children with ASD might:

- persistently repeat words or phrases.
- talk about themselves using their own name or 'he' or 'she'.
- display differences in language development to their peers and this may include muteness or limited speech.
- have limited use of language when communicating but be able to talk freely about specific topics they are interested in.
- interrupt a lot, talk or call out in class. Even when they understand it is not appropriate, they may not have learned about waiting their turn in a conversation.



Supporting Communication - Key strategies

- Reduce your language
- Use the person's name, to cue them in
- Focus on teaching the names of key people
- Provide opportunities for initiation
- Use Visual Supports
- Allow time ... wait

Managing Emotions

Children and young people with ASD do not always find it easy to manage their feelings. They can become overwhelmed, anxious and feel unable to cope. An important skill to learn is the ability to monitor and manage their own emotions and behaviour, so that they can identify and respond appropriately to situations.

Key strategies:

- **Learn to name the feelings** (happy, excited, sad, angry etc.). Many people with ASD can have difficulty understanding their own and others emotions. They need to know how to recognise and respond to the cue that represent particular emotions, such as facial expressions and body language in other people and bodily sensations in themselves. At Touch we use the Emotion Works programme with all pupils, to help them develop skills in this area.
- **Relaxation**
Relaxation approaches such as deep breathing, thinking positively, calming activities (taking a bath, listening to relaxing music, playing on a computer, having a swing, jumping on a trampoline, going for a walk) can start to help someone manage their anxiety.
- **Anger management**
Emotions such as stress, anxiety and frustration can sometimes be expressed as outbursts of anger or aggression. It helps to identify the body sensations that show they are becoming agitated and then to develop a range of alternative, more appropriate and relaxing activities to help them calm down. These can include breathing exercises, counting exercises, going for a walk, listening to music, walking away from the scene or asking for help. The child should also be supported to develop the communication skills needed to show distress and ask for help.

Super Strengths of Individuals with ASD

- The ability to stick to routines
- A good visual memory when information can be seen instead of spoken
- The ability to think concretely and logically
- Exceptional memory
- Attention to detail
- Honesty
- Straightforwardness
- Intense focus on tasks that are interesting to the individual
- Deep passions and intense interests
- Punctual and excellent at following a schedule/routine



Learning at Home - Strategies to Stay Focused and Organised:

Routines

- Create a structure to the day, it may help if you try to make the structure similar to the school day as this is a routine your child is familiar with. Knowing what to expect and when to expect it often eliminates frustration often experienced by switching activities.
- Plan regular breaks throughout the day.
- Share the schedule at the beginning of the day so your child knows what will come next.
- Make a list of activities to complete at the beginning of the day and tick things off as you complete them.
- Encourage your child to stick to one task at a time, multitasking will make concentrating more difficult for your child.
- A visual timetable may help provide additional structure to your child's day. School will be able to provide a template and picture visuals.
- Start the day with activities that require the most mental energy. Completing activities they are not as keen on first can become an amazingly freeing experience as children can check those activities off their list first each day.



Workspace



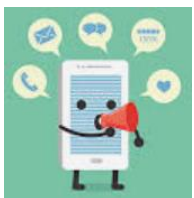
- Try to make the workspace as quiet as possible and use the same area consistently. Moving the workplace can create distractions.
- Keep the workplace organised and free from clutter, this will allow the child to focus on the activity they are completing.
- Limit distractions during working time, remove toys, games and technology that is not needed during learning times.

Time Boundaries



- Break tasks and activities down into chunks rather than doing the task all at once.
- Experiment with the use of a timer, set a time and then take a break. Sand timers can be good if your child is distracted by a ticking timer.
- Communicate learning times with the rest of the family, your child may wish to design a do not disturb poster to let siblings know they are busy and trying to focus.
- Encourage regular physical breaks, use online exercise programmes like Joe wicks, cosmic yoga or go out for a walk.

Distraction Minimising



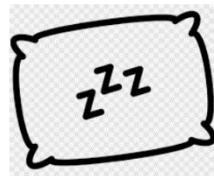
- If your child is working in a noisy environment with other family members around them they may wish to try listening to something quietly on ear phones while they work, this would block out other distracting noises.
- If you can, turn off ring tones and tech alerts so that your child can maintain focus.

Communication



- Keep instructions simple and clear.
- Have your child repeat instructions back to you to help with memory. Older children can write lists or your child may be able to record their instruction onto a device so that they can listen back multiple times.
- Encourage your child to think out loud and verbalise their learning this will help to curb impulsive behaviour.

Rest and Sleep



- Encourage good sleep hygiene. Better sleep can improve a child's concentration and ability to learn.
- Exercise daily, getting at least an hour of exercise each day will help children to sleep better at night.
- Developing a night time routine will help children to relax into sleep. Decide with your child on what that routine would look like, i.e bath, brush teeth, story then lights out.
- Black out blinds or playing white noise can help to block sounds and lights that may be coming from the rest of the home or outside.
- Essential oils like lavender, chamomile and vanilla can be soothing for children and can be dabbed onto a cotton ball to put under their pillow.
- Weighted blankets can help children to understand where their bodies are in space, deeper pressure to muscles and joints can help anxious children drift off to sleep naturally.

Additional Strategies that may help:



- Keep it fun - don't put pressure on the child and don't expect too much too soon. Practise what they know first to improve confidence - this will help them feel good.
- Praise what is done well and comment on how they have done it. For example: 'Well done - you broke that word down really well.'
- Be ready to give help at the right time - don't let them panic and give hints to help, such as: 'That word rhymes with...' or 'Sound out the first letter.'
- Use multi-sensory methods - let them move! Stretchy toys or stress balls can help children to remain focussed when they feel fidgety but need to sit still.
- A large gym/yoga ball can be a good alternative to a chair, some children may also prefer to stand to complete tasks.
- Stop when they have had enough.
- Avoid busy pieces of work, if there is too much text/pictures on a page, use a plain piece of paper to block out non-essential parts of the page.
- Take learning outdoors where you can and used the natural environment to encourage story creating, numeracy (e.g. counting sticks, spotting house numbers and adding them etc.)
- Use visuals to support your child when learning new concepts for example draw out a maths problem in picture form or create a picture mind map for a story.
- Drink lots of water and exercise regularly.

For specific advice around literacy and numeracy strategies you may wish to look in our Supporting Dyslexia Toolkit which has lots of advice and strategies for supporting these core curricular areas.

If your child is experiencing sensory difficulties, you may wish to look in our Sensory Behaviours Toolkit for practical ideas to help identify and ease sensory over and under stimulation.

Some useful websites:

<https://www.parentclub.scot/topics/coronavirus/learning-at-home?page=0>

www.adhdfoundation.org.uk

www.borntobeadhd.co.uk

www.addiss.co.uk/commonquestions.htm

www.scottishadhdcoalition.org

<http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk>

www.autismnetworkscotland.org.uk

www.scottishautism.org

