Behavioural Management for :
ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

What is AD/HD?
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is a syndrome that interferes with an individual's ability to:
- Focus (inattention)
- Regulate activity levels (hyperactivity) o Inhibit behaviour (impulsivity)

There are 3 subtypes:
- Predominantly inattentive
- Predominantly hyperactive and impulsive
- A combination of both subtypes.

An early onset of severe, pervasive and chronic hyperactivity is thought to be genetic in origin and affect aspects of brain function. It is this group of children who are most likely to respond to medical treatment which improves the self-control function of the brain. Unfortunately, there is no medical test that can reliably diagnose AD/HD.

Instead, professionals depend on the knowledge and experience of childhood problems, information provided by parents and teachers, and careful observation of the child to make a diagnosis. Exact prevalence figures for AD/HD in the Republic of Ireland are hard to ascertain at present as AD/HD falls under the broader DES disability category of Emotional Behaviour Disorders.

What we as teachers typically say about pupils with AD/HD in our classrooms

"……..like a whirlwind, always in trouble, just won't wait, shouts out all the time, never settles down to work, never thinks about consequences, forgets the rule minutes after being told, books are all over the place, always being told on by the others, can be really loving, playtime is a nightmare, complete lack of self-control........."

Sounds familiar?

But what can we do to help?

School Tips
Even having one child with AD/HD in a classroom can present a major challenge for even the most experienced teachers. The most effective way of supporting the child is to support the teacher.

- Discuss the child's needs as a whole school issue (or a group issue in large staffs where all personnel in contact with the child are present).
- Adopt a whole school approach to reinforcing agreed rules and providing positive encouragement. The class teacher should inform other staff if s/he is modifying a particular behaviour.
- Class teachers should never feel isolated. Colleagues should be aware when support is needed during school assemblies or at large school events. Someone should be available to step in and help if backup is required.

- All members of staff could try to catch the child being "good" (i.e. acknowledge when the behaviour on the playground and/or corridor is appropriate).
- Adopt a positive commitment to support the pupil with AD/HD.

Classroom Management tips

Classroom-management tips It is very important to examine the physical environment carefully and remove and/or change anything you think may impact negatively on the child's behaviour and learning.

- Clear all clutter from around the child. Give the child a large box for all their belongings if necessary. Have a separate set of pencils, rubber etc available for the pupil to avoid conflict in group situations
- Mark a space with clear tape on the ground around the child's desk and chair and explain to them that this is their working area. Use coloured tape on the floor to indicate spaces; and footsteps to show where walkways are. Use a red line on walls to indicate STOP and THINK. This could be used at all the transition areas i.e. leaving and entering the room.
- Avoid all distracting stimuli. Try not to place the child near heaters, doors, windows or any other high traffic areas in the room (Charts with blue tack on the back of them are great distractions for pupils with AD/HD). Children with AD/HD do not handle change well so avoid changes in physical location where possible..
- Seat the pupil near to you but include as part of the regular class. Maintain proximity without being intrusive. Ensure the pupil is in a row or a group desk where s/he is looking directly at you without facing other pupils.
- The child with ADHD needs quietness more than others to concentrate. So if possible, have a desk or area designated as a quiet area where they and other children can go. Be careful not to use this particular area as a sanction. Use a visual cue to indicate that it is a quiet area. Ask the child to design labels for the area. It could be used to listen to music on headphones or when the pupil needs to relax. Experiment listening to different types of music.
- Surround the pupil with good role models. Select a peer buddy. Pupils with ADHD work better in pairs than in groups as it puts less pressure on them socially..
- Use small picture cards for work tasks on desks to act as reminders. Use Velcro on the desk for younger pupils so you can organise their work materials and visual cue cards easily.
- Scan the covers of the class books and make a visual cue chart where you stick up the cover of the book that is required for each task This can also be used for putting up the books needed for homework.

Teaching tips

- Always be precise and clear when communicating with the pupil
- Give the child something unobtrusive to fidget with during listening times (e.g. a small piece of play-doh or a stress ball)
- Children with ADHD often favour particular learning styles. Establish the child's learning style and their strengths. Make sure tasks fit within the students' learning abilities.
- Make tasks interesting to hold the pupils attention, Vary your delivery. Where a child is faced with a large amount of work on a page (e.g. Maths) break the page into smaller units- this will ensure that there is an element of success. Check that disorganisation isn't the reason for non-completion. Chose rewards carefully

- Allow the pupil to present his/her work in various ways (i.e. computer, dictaphone mind maps, diagrams or pictorial format etc.) Make full use of computers as they provide immediate feedback. Ask the child to rehearse instructions or provide them with written or visual versions. Use cooker timers /sand timers/clocks so that the child does not forget the amount of time available for a task
- Colour code the students books into different subject areas and arrange for the student and a buddy to organise their work space before leaving school each day.
- Teach the child to make checklists or schedules. Try and follow a structured timetable and be close by to supervise the child at transitions from one setting to another (e.g. going to the hall at PE times)
- Try to minimise the amount of time the child is left waiting with nothing to do. Encourage the pupils to ask a 'study buddy' for help. Consider allowing the child out for a run or walk during the day with an adult supervisor.
- Anticipate and prepare for school trips. Always seek out extra supervision.

Behaviour-management tips
- At all times, make sure the child and class know that you like him/her even when the behaviour is not acceptable.
- Display, discuss and reinforce class rules.
- Encourage a problem solving approach in which the child is encouraged to generate solutions into his/her own difficulties. The child is more likely to respond to this constructivist approach than 2 punishing the crime. In fact, punishment is actually more likely to lead to even more oppositional/ defiant behaviour.
- Take time to observe the child's behaviour during whole class, group lessons and on the playground. Look for support from the Resource Teacher to allow you observe the child and also give the Resource Teacher opportunities to observe the child's behaviour while you teach also. Identify the trigger for the behaviour you wish to change.
- Focus on modifying one behaviour at a time. Prioritise the most disruptive behaviour. Try a clear and consistent behaviourist approach with a definite target in mind (e.g. give the child five smiley stickers or stars at the beginning of each day. All s/he has to do to keep them is not to shout out when the teacher is talking. Each failure merits the loss of one sticker, but if three stickers are retained, the child gets a reward. Collaborate closely with the child's parents when using any merit reward system as reinforcement at home can lead to more success.
- Try to use merit certificates and praise as a reward. Use feedback and consequences as quickly as possible following the target behaviour.
- Allow children with AD/HD preferential access to computers. It is a fact that children with AD/HD are able to concentrate significantly longer on computer based tasks than on pencil and paper tasks.
- Time–out could be used. Sometimes pupils with AD/HD get to the stage where, for their own safety and for the safety of others, we may have to give them time –out. The most important feature in using time out is that the school has a whole school policy on the use of it. You must consider who will supervise the pupil and where will they go? The severity of the behaviour should determine where time out takes place . In using time out try to remember to :
1. Keep calm.
2. Give clear firm direction respectfully to the pupil.
3. A void giving class work or tasks during time out.
4. Avoid arguments, discussion or bargaining.
5. Redirect the class to their work calmly.

Finally as teachers we question if it is fair on the other pupils when they see the pupil with AD/HD getting so much attention and being rewarded for the simple things that they do naturally every day. As teachers of pupils with AD/HD when faced with this dilemma we should always consider the following statement and this could guide us in supporting all our pupils. "Fairness isn't giving everybody the same; it's giving what everybody needs"

References

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