

Oppositional defiance disorder

Children show a continual pattern of tantrums, arguing, and angry or disruptive behaviour toward teachers, parents, or other authority figures may have oppositional defiant disorder (ODD).

These issues must persist for at least 6 months for a diagnosis and is characterized by frequent occurrence of at least four of the following behaviours:

1. Losing temper
2. Arguing with adults
3. Actively defying or refusing to comply with requests or rules of adults
4. Deliberately annoying others
5. Blaming others for own mistakes
6. Easily annoyed, angry or resentful

Learning difficulties and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, (ADHD), are frequently associated with ODD. Consider completing the Vanderbilt questionnaires and asking parents too as a screening tool for ADHD.

To help in the classroom:

- Ensure that the young person knows the classroom rules and has 3 clear behaviour targets to follow.
- Put the classroom rules up on the wall and review them with the young person regularly.
- Be sensitive to the fact they may have low self esteem. Give them praise whenever possible and in front of peers eg for staying in their seat, not shouting out, being respectful. If you need to correct their behaviour, do this away from peers when possible.
- Give the child classroom responsibilities
- Listen to the child, try to build a rapport and do not take their behaviours personally
- Keep the child busy, they are more likely to be disruptive in unstructured time
- Give the child choice where possible, they are more likely to complete a task they feel they have chosen
- Keep lines of communication open with home to understand how behaviours are managed there
- Consider a calming down place in the classroom with a “calm box” of small items that the young person finds relaxing or soothing. Allow them selves to take themselves there if they start to feel cross

If these strategies are not working talk to the parents about visiting the GP for an assessment by mental health services.