



# ADHD: when misbehaving becomes more than playing up

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Compiled by the Priory Group for IAPS



# ADHD: when misbehaving becomes more than 'playing up'

It's in a child's nature to push boundaries, especially with parents, relatives and even teachers. Misbehaving, being naughty, 'playing up' and having a 'mad half hour' are all parts of growing up and learning. But when does it go beyond this? Some children may always seem 'out of control' and this could be a sign that they have ADHD.

ADHD is the most common behavioural disorder in the UK, with approximately 2-5% of school-aged children being affected. According to the young people's mental health charity, YoungMinds, around 132,000 children in the UK have severe ADHD.

## How to spot the difference between ADHD and misbehaving

A lot of children may misbehave for a number of reasons, whether they're 'showing off' in front of friends, or feeling upset or tired. The difference is that children with ADHD show symptoms such as aggression and frustration over a longer period of time, and this may eventually lead to problems in their ability to function.

Parents usually notice problems with their child's behaviour around the ages of three or four, both at home and in a social environment. Symptoms to look out for include:

- Fidgeting
- Hyperactivity
- Irritability
- Anger
- Lack of concentration
- Talking a lot
- Lack of fear
- Difficulty sitting still

It is important to note that ADHD is not linked to intelligence, although developmental skills may be slower than the average child.

## Is there a cure?

ADHD is a lifelong condition, although signs of hyperactivity may reduce over time. It is therefore important that all parents, teachers and the child themselves, understand how ADHD can affect the way they function and behave. The effective management of ADHD is vital in enabling children to cope with the demands of everyday life.

## Avoiding school failure

The influence that school has on a child's life is very significant as our experiences at school affect the way we learn, socialise and establish pathways for the future. Children with ADHD are at increased risk of failure at school, having problems accessing further education or employment, and developing other mental health conditions.

The right school placement is crucial. Parents should consider the following:

- Does the management team know about how ADHD affects children in school?
- How much training do teachers in the school get on ADHD?
- Is there a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and does the SENCO ensure that all staff understand the needs of children with ADHD and how to manage these in the learning environment?
- Is there strong pastoral support where young people can develop trusting relationships with members of staff?
- Are social skills taught within the school?
- Does the school have 'chill out' spaces or allow hyperactive pupils an exercise break?
- If children are on medication, do staff members understand how this works?
- Does the school have strong and regular links with parents, providing positive feedback on progress? Does this feedback discuss all aspects of progress including academic, social, emotional and behavioural?
- Does the school provide parents with access to support groups outside school?

Raising levels of achievement for young people with ADHD depends upon how the condition is managed. Supporting the child so they feel understood and motivated to engage fully in school, is crucial.

**IAPS is working in partnership with Priory to deliver a teacher conference on Mental Health, 20 March.**

For more details on the full range of Priory Services visit [www.priorygroup.com](http://www.priorygroup.com), call **0800 086 1188** or [click here to make an enquiry](#).

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