

The Whartons

Primary School

A Quick Guide to Attention and Concentration Difficulties

What causes attention and concentration difficulties?

There are a myriad of potential causes to consider underlying anxiety (home/school related), frustration and/ or sensory issues. The work may be too challenging or too easy or there could be difficulties accessing the curriculum due to language and memory issues. Physical factors such as lack of sleep, hearing, eyesight, diet, or hunger also need to be ruled out. Monitoring the behaviour helps to identify potential causes and solutions.

Implications for a pupil

Difficulties beginning and completing tasks, taking too long on tasks, and requiring continual prompting are all common. Following instructions and organising themselves can be problematic. The pupil is deemed to not be able to work independently and is reliant on adult support. They may struggle to sit still, be on the move and fidgety or perhaps daydream, stare out of the window or appear to be 'in a world of their own'. There can be difficulties with self-regulation, the pupil distracting others and engaging in disruptive behaviour. It may affect their emotional state; may appear moody, irritable, or stressed. Relationships with peers and teachers may be affected and the pupil may come to dislike school. Ultimately their learning is compromised.

How to help - top tips

1. Start the lesson with an engaging activity.
2. Adapt learning tasks into small, well-defined steps and present the information sequentially.
3. Keep language simple – instructions should be clear and short. Using simple language such as "do this" to precede a demonstration may increase their ability to replicate actions.
4. Modelling or demonstrating activities will allow the child to learn visually and to improve their recall. Expect them to do the activity immediately after being modelled to them.
5. Use visual cues such as visual timetables and "now" and "next" cards.
6. Use the child's first name before giving instructions.
7. Give positive reinforcement through praise, attention, and rewards after each step.
8. Use a cue for reminding them to focus on the activity e.g., a special hand gesture, or coloured cards, traffic light system, or thumbs up.
9. Decrease sensory distractions in the environment – consider noise, lighting, clutter etc.
10. Be aware of desk position, for example, sitting at the front of the class to enable good eye contact and facing the board is ideal.
11. Position the child beside a peer with good attention to task.
12. Offer regular movement breaks.
13. A fidget toy or 'chewellery'
14. May be beneficial for some children but not all. The use of an air-filled wedge-shaped cushion, which allows the child some movement in their seat.

Further advice and support

Useful Websites:

[Attention and Concentration | NHS GGC](#)

[LCH CSLT Toolkit](#)

<https://leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk>

Reading:

See also 'A Quick Guide to ADHD'