



St Leonard's SEND Newsletter

Spring Term 1 2024



Our SEND [Special Educational Needs and Disability] Newsletter will be issued every half term and will include useful articles relating to SEND, links to a wide range of services and useful tips for parents/carers whose child has a special need.

What can I do if I think my child has SEND?

Mrs Claire Callaghan is the school SENDCo [Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Co-ordinator]. If you have any concerns regarding your child's special needs, and would like to speak to Mrs Callaghan, please do not hesitate to contact at ccallaghan@st-leonards-stafford.staffs.sch.uk or the school office.



Special educational needs, often referred to as 'SEN' or 'SEND' (Special educational needs and disabilities), is a term used to describe learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for a child to learn compared to children of the same age.

All children may experience challenges with their learning at some point and for most children, these difficulties overcome with support from teachers and home. However, children with SEND are likely to need extra or different help to be able to learn.

How do you know if a child has SEND?

A child or young person has SEN if:

- They have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of other children and young people the same age
- They have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 provisions

A child or young person has a disability if:

- They have a physical and mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

What types of difficulties are SEND?

Children may have difficulties in one or more of these areas:

Cognition and Learning - A child may find all learning difficult or have difficulties with specific activities such as reading or spelling. A child may have trouble understanding instructions and carrying out tasks. A child may have memory difficulties.

Communication and Interaction – A child may have difficulty in talking to others or understanding what others are saying to them. A child may have difficulty with interactions with others, such as not being able to take turns. A child who has speech and language needs will be classed as having communication and interaction needs.

Physical and Sensory – A child may have hearing or vision loss. A child may have difficulty with sensory processing, being under or over-sensitive. A child may have a medical condition which affects them

physically.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health - A child may display behaviours such as having very low self-esteem or being very anxious. A child may display challenging, disruptive or distressing behaviours. A child may have underlying conditions which affect their mental health.

You can find further information about SEND on our school website

<https://www.stleonardsstafford.co.uk/page/?title=SEND&pid=37>

<https://www.stleonardsstafford.co.uk/page/?title=SEND+AND+INCLUSION&pid=22>

Don't forget to visit 'Staffordshire Connects' website: a one stop shop for children and young people who have SEND in Staffordshire.



<https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/home.page>

SENDIASS
Staffordshire Family Partnership

For confidential impartial advice, regarding the law relating to special educational needs and disability, then please contact SENDIASS on:

Phone: 01785 356 921

Email: sfps@staffordshire.gov.uk



SPOTLIGHT ON – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

What is ADHD?

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects behaviour and concentration.

Children and young people with ADHD often seem unusually restless, impulsive or distracted. They may speak or act without thinking, struggle with organisation, find it hard to focus or appear to be always on the go. Some people with ADHD do not experience hyperactivity. This used to be called attention deficit disorder (ADD), though this term is no longer used officially.

ADHD is not a mental health condition or a learning disability. But children and young people with ADHD may also have other conditions or experience mental health problems.

Living with ADHD can be very challenging, for children and young people as well as for their parents and carers. But the right diagnosis and support can make a big difference to a child's learning, life skills and relationships, as well as making family life easier. There is also lots you can do as a parent or carer to help your child manage the things they find difficult.

What are the most common signs of ADHD?

A child with ADHD may:

- be easily distracted, finding it difficult to start or finish tasks
- often feel unable to concentrate
- often feel restless or fidgety
- be very talkative, often interrupting or blurting things out
- act impulsively, for example doing something before considering consequences or being prone to taking risks
- be easily angry or frustrated, or struggle to deal with emotions
- find making or maintaining friendships difficult
- be disorganised, for instance often losing things or being late
- lack awareness of time

Every child or young person with ADHD is an individual and they may not display all of these behaviours. Many of these behaviours are normal in younger children. They can also be caused by traumatic experiences. So if your child is showing some of these signs, it does not necessarily mean they have ADHD.



It's important to understand that age and gender can also affect how someone with ADHD behaves. This can make it harder to spot signs of ADHD, particularly in girls. Girls are more likely to be undiagnosed or wrongly diagnosed with other conditions.

Typically, the signs of ADHD develop in early childhood and they may become particularly noticeable at times of significant change, such as when a child starts or changes school.

What to do if you think your child might have ADHD

If your child frequently experiences some of these things and it's affecting their day-to-day life, discuss your concerns with your child's GP. Before doing this, talk to your child's teacher and the school special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) about what they have noticed.

The GP may want to refer your child for assessment, as ADHD can only be diagnosed by a specialist such as a child and adolescent psychiatrist or paediatrician.

Sometimes parents are reluctant to pursue assessment. They may be worried about 'labelling' their child or about stigma, or they may prefer to watch and wait. These feelings are normal. But parents and young people who do seek diagnosis can find it helps them access the right support, understand and manage challenges, and identify individual strengths.

ADHD diagnosis and support



ADHD assessment is usually done through the NHS mental health service for children and young people, known as CAMHS. Diagnosis is most commonly made in childhood. In the majority of cases, young people continue to experience ADHD behaviours and qualities into adulthood.

There is no single, definitive test for ADHD. Specialists will base a clinical diagnosis on their observations of your child, discussions and questionnaires (with you and your child), and information from your child's school.

They will consider how long the behaviours have been present, how much they impact daily life and whether they might be due to another condition. The NHS states that around 60-80% of children with ADHD have at least one other condition (such as [autism](#), dyslexia, dyspraxia, [anxiety](#) or [behaviour issues](#)). In some cases, this means a child may be given more than one diagnosis.

What you can do to support your child with ADHD

- Be understanding
- Give simple instructions
- Set clear boundaries
- Involve the family
- Build healthy routines
- Help with organisation
- Praise your child
- Manage triggers
- Recognise strengths
- Find local support

The impact of ADHD on your child's mental health

Any child or young person can struggle with their mental health and wellbeing, whether or not they have ADHD. This might be caused by things like family change, [bullying](#), [exam stress](#) or a [traumatic event](#).

But having ADHD may also mean your child has extra challenges – such as social difficulties, struggling to manage their emotions or getting into trouble at school. This can leave them more vulnerable to [low self-esteem](#), [anxiety](#) or [depression](#).

Children and young people with ADHD frequently have other developmental or mental health conditions. It is important to ensure they have the appropriate support for these.

As a parent there is a lot you can do to support your child with their wellbeing and mental health:

- Encourage your child to talk about how they are feeling with you. Our [starting a conversation guide](#) has ideas for keeping communication open
- If you feel your child may have a mental health problem or another condition alongside ADHD, discuss your concerns with their GP or ADHD specialist.

Working with school if your child has ADHD

ADHD is a special education need (SEN), and it may be referred to as a specific learning difference (SpLD). Your child is entitled to appropriate support to help them thrive socially and educationally. This could include potential adjustments in certain situations, such as extra time or rest breaks for exams, movement breaks in lessons, written instructions for tasks and a seating plan that minimises distractions.

Discuss the diagnosis and needs with the school's SENCO, taking a list of your concerns and background information to the meeting.

Your child may be entitled to an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) which details the support they need and how it will be provided. (The National Autistic Society has helpful information about [EHC plans](#)).

Good communication between you and school can be really helpful in ensuring your child thrives in education and meets their potential. Our parent guide to support has more advice on talking to school or college.

Looking after your own wellbeing

Parenting a child with ADHD can sometimes be isolating, upsetting or exhausting. Sometimes parents feel judged or blamed by others (unjustifiably as parenting does not cause ADHD). It is entirely understandable if you are finding things difficult.

It's important to recognise the impact the situation is having on you, and think about ways you can take care of yourself – including getting support from other people so that you can take some time off. It's okay to ask for help when you need it, and to share your worries with someone you trust. We have advice on looking after yourself as well as your child.

[Parents' guide to looking after yourself](#)

Useful helplines and websites

- **YoungMinds Parents Helpline**

We support parents and carers who are concerned about their child or young person's mental health. Our Parents Helpline provides detailed advice and information, emotional support and signposting.

You can speak to us over the phone or chat to us online.

You can speak to us over webchat between 9.30am and 4pm from Monday-Friday. When we're closed, you can still leave us a message in the chat. We'll reply to you by email in 3-5 working days. Opening times:

9.30am-4pm, Monday-Friday [0808 802 5544](tel:08088025544)

[Parents Helpline](#)

- **ADHD and You**
Provides information and resources including medication details, tips for parents/carers and checklists for school and medical appointments.
[ADHD and You](#)
- **ADHD UK**
Information and resources on subjects including diagnosis, medication, education and employment, as well as online support groups.
[ADHD UK](#)
- **Scottish ADHD Coalition**
A directory of local services supporting young people, families and adults with ADHD in Scotland.
[Scottish ADHD Coalition](#)
- **ADDISS**
ADDISS (The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service) provides information, moderated online forums and local support groups.

Advice line: Tuesday – Thursday, 9:30am -5pm

[020 8952 2800](tel:02089522800)
info@addiss.co.uk

ADDISS
- **Contact**
Provides support, information and advice for families with children with disabilities or other conditions including ADHD. Also runs family workshops and activities.

[Free online chat service](#) available.
Opening times:

9:30am - 5pm, Monday - Friday

[0808 808 3555](tel:08088083555)
helpline@contact.org.uk

Contact
- **YoungSibs**
UK-wide online support service for siblings under 18 who have a brother or sister who is disabled or has special educational needs or a serious long-term condition including ADHD.
[YoungSibs](#)
- **Parenting Mental Health**
Digital support community and charity offering information, peer support, facilitated listening circles, mentoring and courses for parents of children with mental health difficulties.

Founder Suzanne Alderson’s book *Never Let Go - How to Parent Your Child Through Mental Illness* (Penguin, 2020) outlines how she supported her daughter to recovery after she became depressed and suicidal.