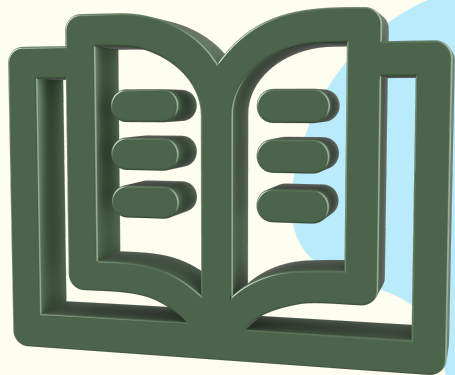


RUBY JAMES

2500109

ALL THINGS BEING EQUAL

INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH ADHD



What is inclusion?

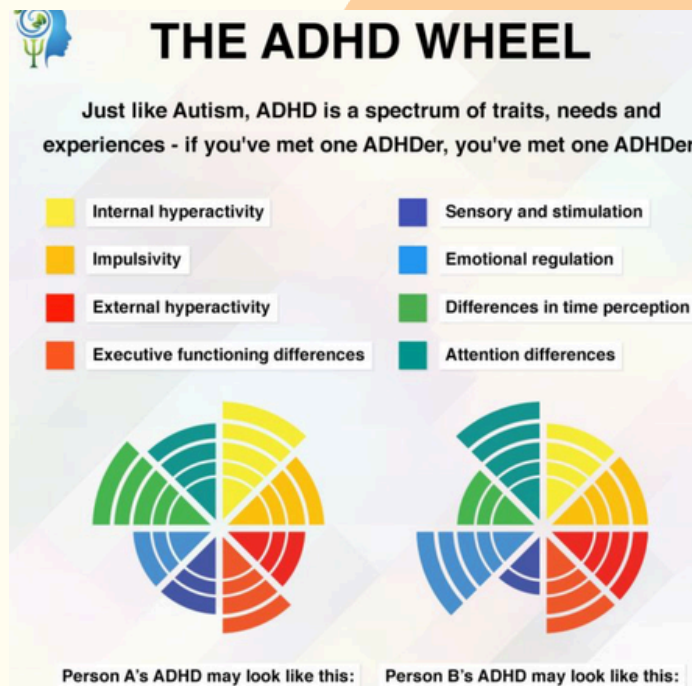
Inclusion in a primary school setting involves creating a safe and welcoming space where children can feel fully supported. Welsh Government (2018b) outlines that Inclusion means recognising that all pupils bring diverse strengths and needs, allowing the classroom teacher to adapt to each pupil. This is important to consider with pupils diagnosed with ADHD because their executive-function differences can have an impact on their engagement from day to day. The UNCRC, UNICEF (2025) supports the idea of inclusion within education, ensuring children have the right to a quality education. This further ensures that every child has an equal opportunity within education to be treated correctly, as emphasised in articles 28 and 29 (UNICEF, 2022). Policies and practices are put in place to respond to diversity from an inclusive aspect that values children's education, removing barriers to maintain appropriate support within the primary school setting.

Understanding ADHD

Costa (2026) emphasises that ADHD is also known as a neurodevelopmental condition characterised by persistent patterns of impulsivity that can significantly impact the pupil's focus in a classroom setting. This book covers many aspects of neurodiversity within an educational setting. Despite not sharing a focus on a primary base setting specifically, the explanations throughout link well to implementation, particularly when considering an effective structure and routine, because this is the stage where it is important for pupils to develop their executive-function skills effectively.

Work from Colomer et al (2017) related to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) highlights the impact that symptoms like impulsivity and executive-function difficulties have on the individual's school experience. This article supports my point above with empirical evidence that ADHD can shape an individual's behaviour and disrupt the child's education regarding motivation and attention span. Focusing on the Primary School setting, these characteristics can be observed during structured learning where concentration is required. Despite this, many are unaware that ADHD is not a behavioural choice or a result of a poor upbringing. It is a neurological difference that impacts day-to-day activities, including memory. Understanding this is vital for classroom teachers because the misconceptions can lead to inappropriate responses and missed opportunities to offer support.

Research from Taylor et al (2018) has shown the functional differences that pupils diagnosed with ADHD often have regarding their creative strengths. The article states that individuals with ADHD show higher levels of divergent thinking and that most pupils tend to excel in creative and expressive curriculum. The Welsh Government, 2022, heavily supports this with the Curriculum for Wales, introduced to ensure all aspects of education were covered to suit all pupils. Additionally, some pupils experience stages of hyperfocus, allowing them to engage thoroughly with the tasks assigned to their interests, as well as hands-on, practical learning. Grotewiel, M.M. et al. (2023). From a teacher's point of view, it is crucial to ensure a healthy pupil-teacher relationship, being able to recognise what is best for the pupil, but also what challenges the pupil to consider whilst planning future lessons.



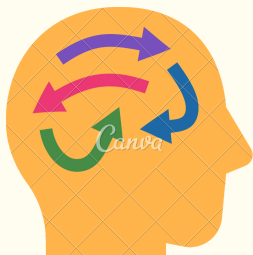
(Goldsmith, 2024)

Why teachers are key.

Teachers play a key role in ensuring the classroom has an inclusive and safe environment, which is particularly true when supporting children with ADHD. A case study written by Dewi Nurlyan Purwita et al (2025) shows the importance of primary school teachers, outlining that they can shape routines and the learning environment based on their pupils to ensure all are heard and supported to the expected level. This links with ADHD as children often rely on a structured routine to maintain focus whilst engaging throughout the day. Teachers also play a significant role in setting the tone they set for their classroom, linking well with ensuring structured routines to avoid additional stress, thereby creating a safe and inclusive space for the children with ADHD to feel seen and heard from an early age in education.

Whilst discussing the tone above, it is notable that the classroom teachers are key to adjusting the curriculum to fit the child best. Legislation.gov.uk (2018) highlights that the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Wales Act 2018 significantly shares an inclusive approach to ALN in education, ensuring every child experiences education in an equal way and to a quality standard. Every teacher will view this act from a different perspective, meaning implementing this into practice differently but effectively. Examples of putting the inclusive approach into practice include being flexible, giving the children an opportunity to express their needs, and ensuring movement breaks for the children if noted under their IDPs. These are a few examples that help remove potential barriers to inclusion for children with ADHD in a primary setting.

Additionally, an article written by Berchiatti et al. (2021) explains how teachers must be able to adapt to different situations. For example, misunderstandings often occur under ADHD related topics like the pupils' fidgeting or struggling to sit still in class. Qualified teachers can notice these patterns and adapt to the pupil's situation by understanding whether the behaviour is intentional or related to their diagnosis, responding sensitively to the pupil's behaviour when necessary. This emphasises that teachers are key in the education of children with ADHD because they understand how to regulate and diffuse unnecessary situations, avoiding stereotypical labels like "disruptive".



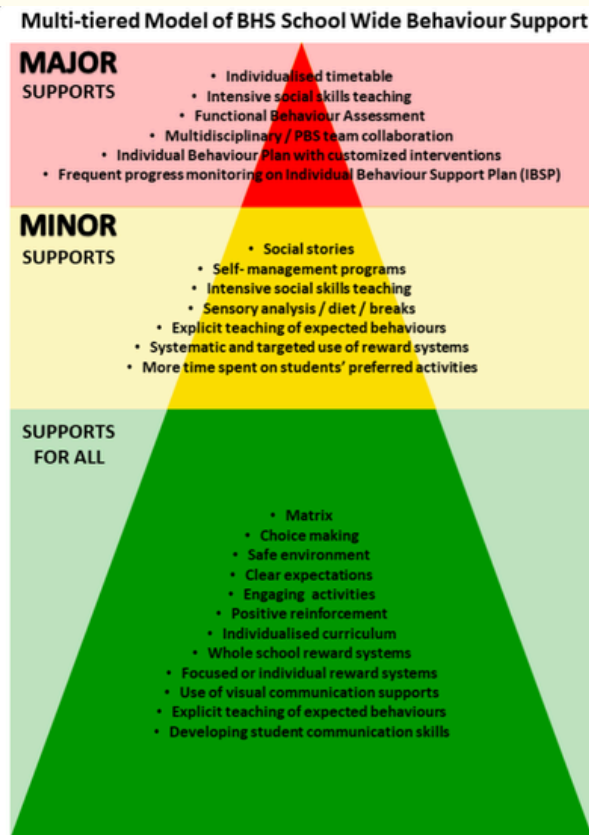
Teachers are seen to be key in a child with ADHD's education, especially while understanding that teachers observe pupils in detail, being able to notice the pupils' triggers to day-to-day activities. This is key in education for the teacher to further use this information to offer support for the child and to maintain a good pupil-teacher relationship. Berchiatti et al. (2021b) also stress the importance of building and trusting relationships, showing that teachers are key to making small adjustments in their practice to make sure every child feels valued in their classroom for the best academic outcome.

Evidence-based inclusive practices

Many case studies, legislation documents, and policies emphasise the importance of evidence-based inclusive practice for supporting pupils with ADHD in mainstream primary classrooms. For example, the NICE guideline (2018) published a section discussing ADHD, explaining how practitioners, including classroom teachers, should implement strategies to support the pupil early in their education. The principles show that it is vital that the teacher stays organised and up-to-date with staff training and also remains open to making adjustments to their day-to-day learning techniques, which provides a deeper understanding of different situations regarding pupils with ADHD. This is because all pupils with ADHD experience different presentations, implying that one strategy will not be effective for all. Wolfers et al (2019) highlight how ADHD heterogeneity varies for each individual, demonstrating that this challenges the classroom teacher with their workload and also how well they know their pupils to adapt their plan to suit all pupils.

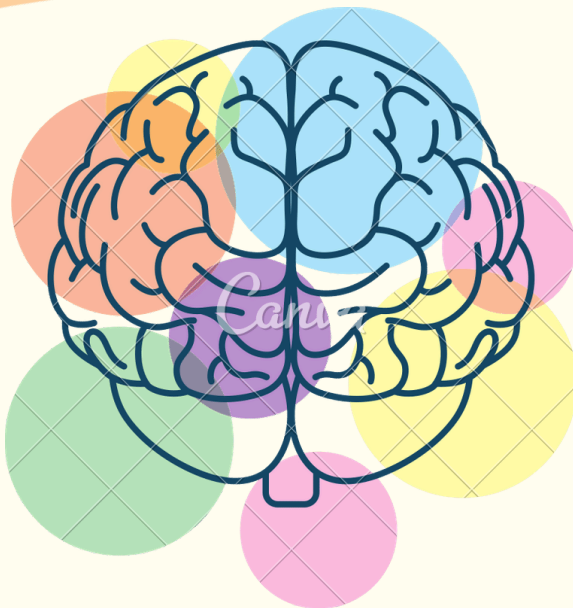
Examples of evidence-based inclusive practices for pupils with ADHD include regular movement breaks, which can be included in the child's IDP with the new implementation of the 2018 ALN Act. Swansea Council (2023) reinforces the new implementation by introducing IDPs, explaining how these must be used across all mainstream schools. Movement breaks are highly effective for a pupil with ADHD as they allow them to regulate any build-up of emotion and also their attention to re-engage when they return to class. Whilst focusing on a primary setting, the teacher needs to stay organised to maintain and keep track of the pupils' IDPs. The use of the IDPs also demonstrates how teachers adjust their learning to suit each child through ensuring things like movement breaks throughout the day. By providing rewarding breaks throughout the day, this allows pupils time to re-engage after losing focus to prevent potential burnout and restlessness.

Another example may include breaking tasks into manageable steps to maintain a clear structure for each task. This is effective for pupils with ADHD, as an article written by Yang et al. (2017) states that pupils with ADHD face working memory limitations, meaning they face struggles to focus on multiple steps at once, feel overwhelmed with a pile of work to tackle, and are unable to remember the key points of the task. Through implementing this into the children's routine, their independence can progress. To avoid this, the classroom teacher can provide clear instructions with diagrams to help the pupil with ADHD visualise the steps effectively, without constantly relying on support. By presenting the pupil tasks step by step, this gives the child with ADHD independence, strengthening their confidence whilst attempting tasks alone in class.



(Bulleen Heights School, 2026)

Alongside this, the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) (2025a) behaviour guidance provides documents stating how mainstream schools must ensure a positive environment to implement different approaches to embed the EEF's concept of improving behaviour in schools. This aligns with the inclusive strategies for ADHD, including visual supports and more. This emphasises that learning should be more than the traditional methods of sitting at a desk with pen and paper. Learning should be fun and active to regulate emotions and keep the pupils engaged throughout the day. These guidelines further strengthen the idea that evidence-based approaches that are applied to practice underpin classroom teachers to ensure that children with ADHD receive the support they need and deserve effectively.



Barriers to inclusion

Although teachers are key in supporting children with ADHD in primary education, barriers to inclusion are still seen, impacting pupils' education. The barriers can range from social to barriers regarding executive function, and these barriers cause issues with pupils with ADHD, potentially causing them to fall behind with their work, lose focus during lessons, miss key information for future exams, and struggle to work individually. This indicates that the lack of inclusion towards pupils with ADHD can significantly impact their education. Despite this, being aware of the early signs of the barriers allows staff to recognise the needs with enough time to adapt their lesson plans to what is best for the pupils, further reducing the barrier to inclusion.

Research from (Loe, I.M and Feldman, H.M, 2007) shows that pupils with ADHD face a risk of performing academically lower than their classroom peers due to the range of potential barriers they face throughout education. This barrier highlights the differences that teachers need to be aware of when implementing effective and inclusive strategies in the classroom, particularly within a primary school setting, where this is an essential stage for pupils' developmental progress. Grenier (2019) supports this by stating that in the long term, the early primary phase for children is significant for their learning. This indicates that primary schools shape a pupil's confidence to develop and ask for support with any barriers they encounter throughout their journey in education.



In addition to this, a systemic barrier to inclusion can be seen with the lack of staff training that teachers experience when supporting pupils with ALN. Specifically with ADHD, teachers may be unaware of how to recognise the neurological differences compared to expected behaviour. Work from (Greenway and Edwards Rees, 2020a) shows that some classroom teachers and teaching assistants are unaware of how to implement effective strategies within the classroom, ensuring they are also following the new implementation of the ALN Code and ALN Act in Wales while supporting all pupils with additional learning needs, which is seen to be a challenge for staff with little training. Some may view this as a positive, using the lack of information as a sign to update the staff training with more knowledge around these key areas of implementing an inclusive setting for all. As these barriers build up over time, they may create an uneasy atmosphere in the classroom, making pupils feel uncomfortable receiving the support they need. This further results in a lack of confidence whilst facing issues meeting these requirements regarding inclusion for pupils with ADHD and ALN as a whole, further reinforcing barriers to inclusion.



(Barnes, 2022)

Hassani, Schwab, and Boda (2022) explore how barriers to inclusion show negative perceptions from the pupils' classmates, where they misinterpret ADHD, excluding them from opportunities in the classroom, for example, with group work. This attitudinal barrier is seen as socially excluding pupils with ADHD, leaving the pupils feeling isolated in the classroom environment, where they deserve to feel safe. Additionally, individuals may misinterpret ADHD related behaviour as misbehaving. Combining these barriers, it is possible that the pupils' self-esteem decreases from the lack of understanding from outsiders (Greenway and Edwards Rees, 2020b). Whilst outlining barriers to inclusion, it is important to acknowledge how people underestimate ADHD through misinterpreting it as behaviour.

In addition to the barriers above, environmental factors also have an impact on pupils with ADHD in primary education classrooms. It is known that the environment of a primary school setting is labelled as noisy and full of movement. For a pupil with ADHD, this can lead to sensory overstimulation (Thompson, S.D. and Raisor, J.M, 2013). Pupils with ADHD tend to struggle to focus on one topic at once, especially with multiple background noises. As a result of this, pupils may feel overwhelmed and unsettled in the primary classroom, affecting their education due to the lack of focus. This shows the importance of the teacher's role to promote inclusion by creating a calm environment with a clear structure to the day for pupils to feel at ease.

How teachers can reduce barriers

As seen above, barriers to learning are common when attempting to create an inclusive classroom setting. Teachers play key roles in avoiding barriers to give pupils the education they deserve. Kreider, Medina, and Slamka (2019) show that pupils with ADHD often face barriers with time management and finding routines that best fit their lifestyle. Shikerkar and Vajaratkar (2022) indicate in their qualitative study that structured routines are seen as an effective strategy to remove barriers because pupils with ADHD struggle to manage their tasks all at once. This supports the idea that dividing tasks into smaller tasks and manageable steps allows the pupils to maintain focus throughout the lesson and helps reduce information overload, causing them to lose focus.

An additional way to reduce barriers is to encourage tasks that boost independence for pupils. As discussed above, children with ADHD often feel disconnected from their classroom peers, leading the pupil to self-doubt their academic abilities, Heiman, Olenik-Shemesh and Eden, (2014). Education Endowment Foundation (2025b) highlights that teachers can reduce this through assigning structured tasks throughout the day to encourage independent learning, slowly building the pupils confidence from giving them the opportunity to have complete control over their work, before further integrating the responsibility into their group tasks to familiarise pupils with confidence across the whole classroom for all pupils to engage with the assigned tasks. The expected result of this should reduce the barrier of pupils misunderstanding their peers diagnosed with ADHD and ALN as a whole.

Ensuring a strong pupil-teacher relationship is key to maintaining an inclusive setting in the classroom. We can argue that a strong relationship between the teacher and their class allows the pupils to feel safe and understood in their environment, which further results in fewer misunderstandings, reducing the chances of drawing inaccurate conclusions about the pupils with ADHD. Walker and Graham (2019) indicates that a safe environment is key to an inclusive setting for all, allowing them to feel comfortable to engage and seek help when challenges occur during tasks.

As seen in the section above, it is important that the teacher removes any additional disruptions that cause pupils to disengage with the tasks. Pupils with ADHD are likely to miss key details when distractions are present.

GOV.WALES (2011) states in the Equality Act that small changes are mandatory to ensure support for all pupils. These changes can include the layout and structures of the classroom, adjusting seating plans, and presenting tasks in an interactive way in order to capture the class's attention and simplify their learning.

Combining these strategies that teachers can use to reduce barriers to inclusion for pupils with ADHD, it is shown that a supportive and safe learning environment is key for all pupils from primary education through to further education. Each pupil is different, and it is important that teachers are able to notice this and adapt their plans to meet each child's needs in the most effective way possible.

Legislation & policy

Legislation and policies are the foundation for inclusive practices, outlining the key information that schools should ensure is in place to support both staff and pupils. Without these, pupils' rights would not be seen or heard, and their needs would not be met to the standards they deserve. The Equality Act 2010 presents legislation that supports pupils with additional learning needs, including ADHD. (GOV.UK (2010)). This piece of legislation introduces the nine protected characteristics, including disability, protecting pupils from discrimination and a lack of inclusion. Additionally, this Act ensures that schools make adjustments not just for pupils with ADHD, to prevent all pupils from feeling that they are disadvantaged.



(Lincoln.ac.uk, 2020)

In addition to this, Wales released the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act in 2018 (ALNET), which later influenced the (ALN code 2021). Both documents provided frameworks focused on support for pupils with additional learning needs, including ADHD. The ALNET Act outlined the need for early identification of individuals' needs, linking well to the individual development plans. For pupils with ADHD, these plans identified the support the pupils are required to access alongside their learning (Welsh Government 2018a). These may include movement breaks, information based on their behaviour linked to ADHD, strategies that support the pupil best, their learning needs and more. Not only does this require schools to support the pupil, but also to support the families as well, ensuring their child gains the support they have a right to receive. The ALN Code 2021, which builds upon ALNET, addresses this issue from a classroom point of view, sharing information to ensure pupils with ADHD are recognised and that their needs are being met correctly (Welsh Government 2021).

The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of a Child also link well with the idea of inclusive education, as it implies inclusion as a child's right, seen in articles 28 and 29 (UNICEF n.d.). This further supports pupils with ADHD as it legally suggests that schools must be inclusive and supportive to all, protecting all pupils from discrimination, as stated in Article 2. This supports my argument in the sections above regarding stereotypes like "naughty" and "lazy". The UNCRC supports pupils with ADHD by helping to eliminate misinterpretations of pupils diagnosed with ADHD.

Tying these policies and legislative documents together, all share the same aim of ensuring all schools provide support for pupils with ADHD and ALN to the standards they are required to receive through practice. With these put in place, it is likely to remove barriers to learning and barriers to inclusion, ensuring that all children succeed in a primary school setting, and as they progress through to further education.

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