

Multisensory Resources when working with children with ADHD

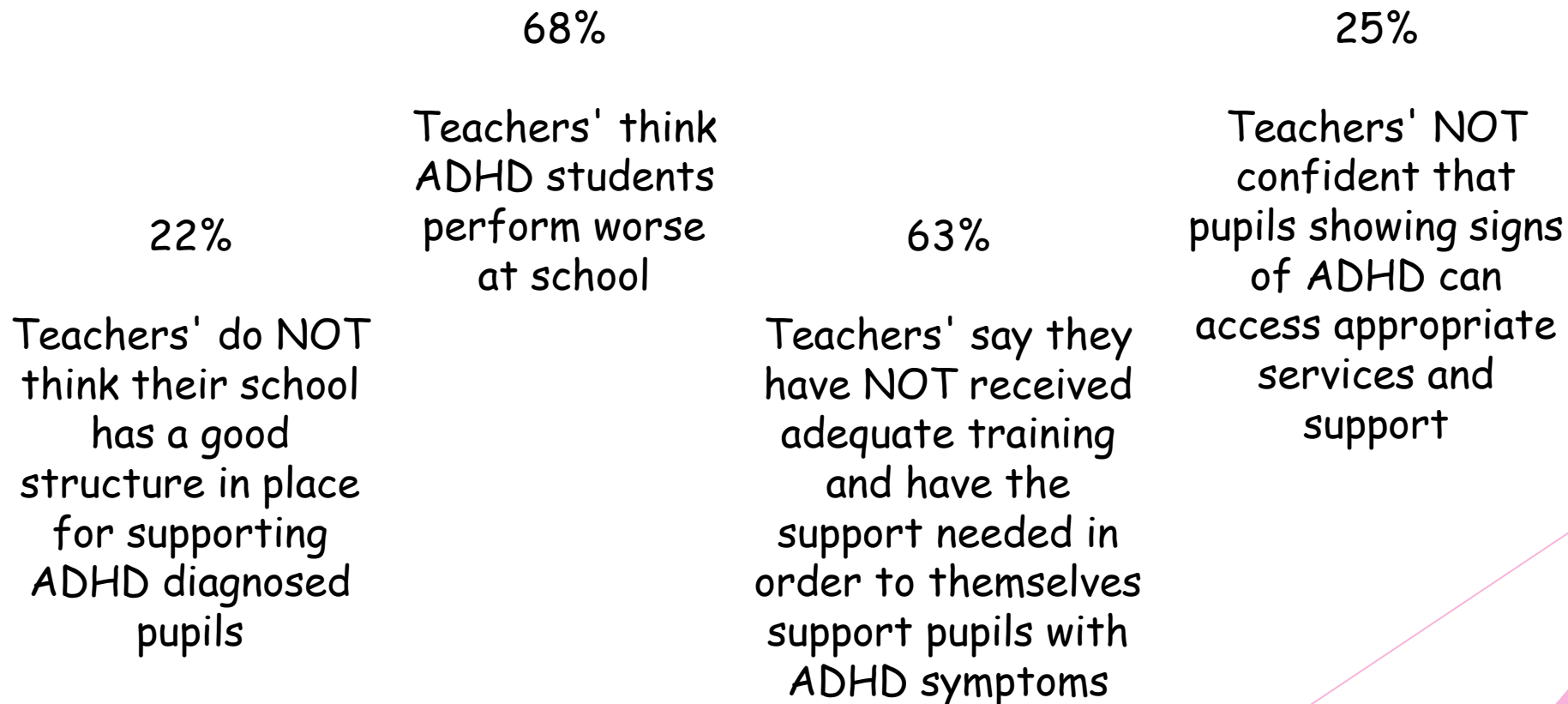
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Introduction to ADHD

- ▶ ADHD UK describes it as “a mental health condition that is defined through analysis of behaviour”.
- ▶ The Great Ormand Street Hospital for children suggests that the “core symptoms of ADHD are difficulty concentrating, hyperactivity, and acting impulsively”, based on these core symptoms of ADHD it is clear that a child with this specific learning difficulty would struggle in the school and classroom environment without adequate support and interventions put in place to support them.

- ▶ There is no one cause of ADHD but it is believed that it has a genetic risk as it often runs in families but also that environmental factors could increase a child's risk of developing ADHD.
- ▶ May, Ford et al (2021) believes that "Among children aged 6-16, there is a clear association between attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms and academic attainment", their research implies that children with a diagnosis of ADHD did worse in literacy and numeracy assessments compared with their peers.

The Following information was taken from the COMRES Primary and Secondary Teacher Survey (2017)



Strategies when working with pupils with ADHD

- Sit pupil where there is least distraction
- Classroom rules visible for the pupils
- Keep desks clear and organised
- Fidget toys
- Keep eye contact when talking to the pupils
- Provide specific and frequent feedback
- Build in breaks for physical activity
- Differentiate work
- Focus attention onto academic attainment rather than behaviour
- More positive reinforcement
- Keep the pupil close to you to help keep them on task
- Provide small and regular rewards

Fidget Toys



Images taken
from Google
Images (2021)

Why fidget toys help students with ADHD

How to ADHD (2016) describes ADHD as having a “floating attention” meaning that although children are focused on an activity they have a bit of floating attention that notices sounds, feelings, smells, sights and touch sensations that distract them from what they are meant to be concentrating on.

They go on to suggest that by acknowledging a child’s floating attention and distractions and giving it something to focus on, in this case a fidget toy, it helps the child focus on the main task by focusing their distractions on the task of playing with the fidget toy.

https://youtu.be/71PB_Rulk5M?t=9

Studies

- ▶ Ledford et al (2020) suggests that the use of fidget spinners may have a stimuli that encourages concentration on the fidget to itself rather than on the instructions given by the class teacher.
- ▶ Their study showed that in their observations when given fidget toy, such as the ones above, that the children's engagement per session decreased in comparison to when they did not having them, showing that the fidget toy may prove as more of a distraction that a help.

Advantages of Fidget Toys

- ▶ Small and easy to move to different locations
- ▶ Variety so there is something to suit everybody
- ▶ Many allow fidgeting with minimal disruption
- ▶ Cheap to purchase
- ▶ Multisensory

Disadvantages of Fidget Toys

- ▶ Can be disruptive to others
- ▶ Can be overused so a pupil becomes reliant on them
- ▶ May encourage others in the class to bring in toys
- ▶ Could draw unwanted attention to the pupil
- ▶ Not all staff would be accommodating which may lead to confrontations

Conclusion

- ▶ Although the research shows that the use of fidget toys may not have the desired effect, being more of a distraction than a help, many teachers and schools still use them in the classroom.
- ▶ It is important to look at each pupil as an individual and use whatever resources work for the child and the class on a whole. When working with children with specific learning difficulties there is no one size fits all.

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