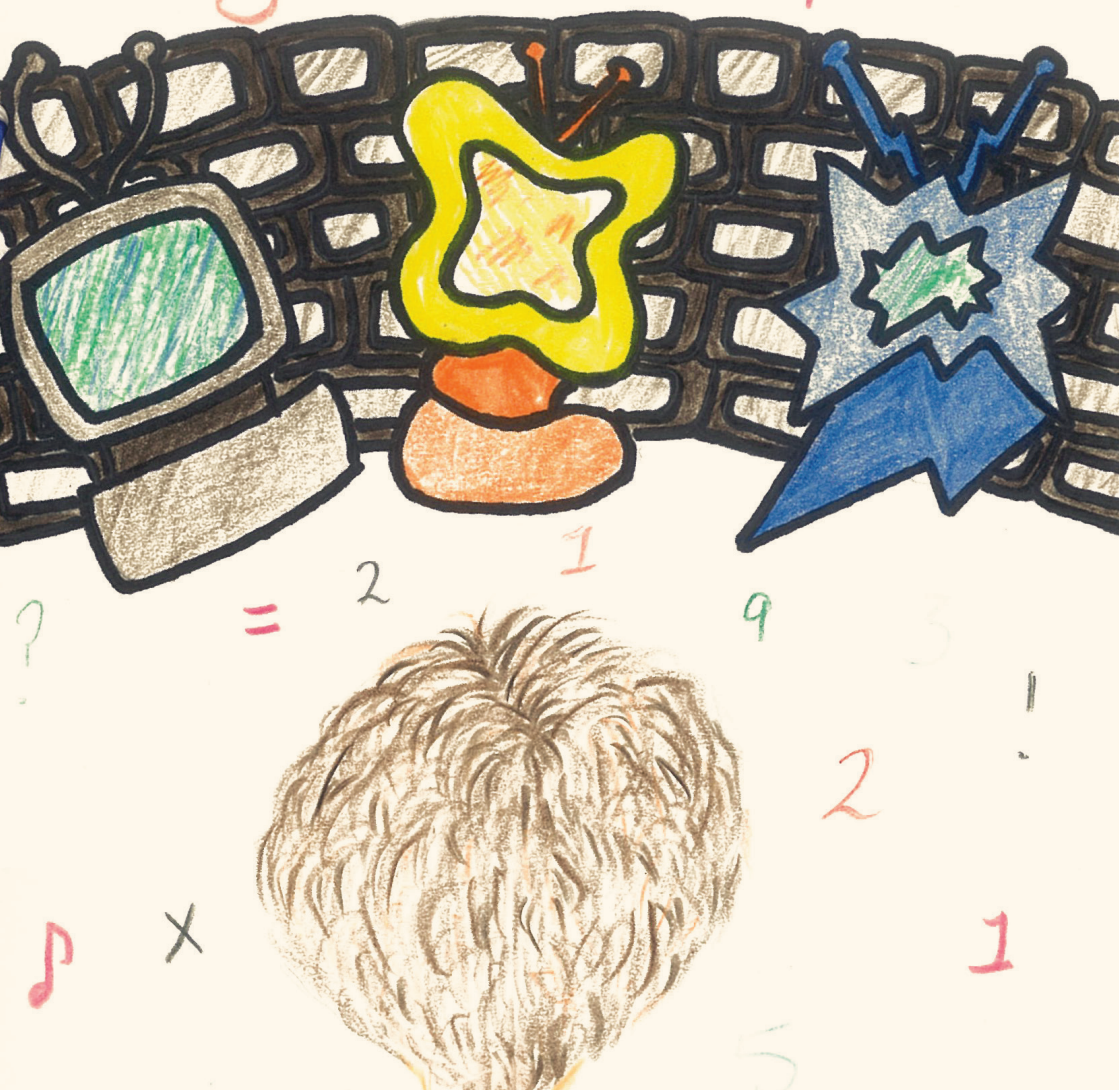


# Including Pupils with ADHD:

## A Practical Guide for Student Teachers on School Placement



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# Foreword

This booklet was developed by five final year primary student teachers as part of the assessment of a module which focuses on inclusion. The principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) were used to develop the assessment process for this module, with particular emphasis on provision of choice. Students had choices in relation to some aspects of the assessment and in terms of who and how many others they would work with, within a range of parameters. One assignment option was to create a handbook for students on school placement to support the effective inclusion of pupils with special educational needs.

Within this option, there was also a range of choices in relation to the focus for the content of the handbook. In addition to the handbook, students were required to present a separate document outlining their rationale for their choices and the information sourced.

Some of the work produced by the circa 400 students on this module was outstanding. This booklet, developed by Eleanor, Tara, Catherine Mary, Alice and Johanna, represents well the work of their cohort in the class of 2017/18 on the BEd primary programme in DCU. As their teacher, it was gratifying and exciting to see the level of engagement and insight evident in the work of these students as they were at the point of embarking on their teaching careers.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to work with HADD-ADHD Ireland in publishing this booklet. Particular thanks are due to the CEO, Ken Kilbride, for embracing the idea of publishing this work. We also wish to gratefully acknowledge research funding received from DCU Institute of Education to support the publication of this work. For the purposes of publication, the original assignment has been edited to amalgamate the handbook and accompanying rationale document, and to turn the assignment into a publication.

While this booklet is aimed at student teachers on school placement, it may be useful for all teachers.

**Ann Marie Farrell**

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September 2018

## Rationale for our handbook

As part of one of our final year modules on the BEd programme in DCU, we were given a range of choices for one of the assessments. We chose to produce a handbook for student teachers on school placement and to focus on considerations for inclusion of pupils with ADHD because we all had experience of working with these pupils on at least one of our placements over the four years of the course. We thought that a practical guide to supporting a child with ADHD in a classroom would be of value to any student teacher going out on school placement for two reasons.

Firstly, we believed the handbook would support student teachers to consider their planning and therefore, their teaching, to effectively include a pupil with ADHD in all lessons. Secondly, we believed that much of the advice we would provide regarding considerations for pupils with ADHD would actually be applicable in any primary classroom and therefore, the handbook could potentially support the work of all student teachers on placement.

As student teachers, when compiling this handbook we continuously reminded ourselves that our own beliefs, attitudes and emotions impact how we respond to situations that may arise within the classroom. Florian & Spratt (2013) recognise that teachers should be encouraged to view difficulties in learning as dilemmas for themselves as opposed to deficits in children. We kept this thought in our heads for the duration of this project. We endeavoured to create easy-to-follow guidelines which would enable student teachers to act on this view. Teachers need to believe in themselves and their capacity to support all children in their class including students with additional needs (Rouse, 2009), because if we do not believe in ourselves how can we expect pupils to trust in us and follow our guidance?

The elements we chose to include in the booklet are (a) an introduction to ADHD, (b) teachers' attitudes and responses to behaviour, (c) creating a suitable social and learning environment, (d) classroom organisation, (e) useful resources.

The poem in the booklet entitled *The Child*, is based on various readings which highlighted what it is like to be a child with ADHD. The idea that it feels like "having a thousand TVs blaring" was one that really struck us, making us consider how difficult it can be for a child with ADHD to focus in the busy environment of a classroom. Consequently, this image became the inspiration for the cover. The poem entitled *The Teacher* is written by us as a summary of the main principles of the handbook, and how a teacher should both think and act in relation to children that have ADHD. We feel that this poem really demonstrates our learning as a result of this project.

As a group, we thoroughly enjoyed this practical assignment and feel we have created something that is very useful and practical and, indeed, something of which we are very proud. Undoubtedly, this work will inform our future teaching by making us much more aware and understanding in relation to ADHD and we hope that it will support the student teachers following behind us on the BEd programme when they are on school placement.

Eleanor Bolger, Tara Butler, Catherine Mary Byrne, Alice Kelly, Johanna Wickham  
4th Year BEd Students 2017/18, IoE, DCU  
September 2018

# School Placement Observation Days

It is really important that you make maximum use of all observation opportunities before and during the school placement period.

Try to take a structured approach to observation.

## Take note of:

- Procedures already in place by the teacher for a range of activities e.g. transitions between lessons, movement/use of materials during art time, procedures for going to other parts of the school (playground, PE hall etc), what happens on rainy days, what is the procedure for break-time/lunchtime/home-time? These are general procedures that matter for all the children in the class but some children, particularly those with ADHD, will need you to mirror those procedures when you take over the classroom, particularly those for whom change in routine is an issue. Dealing with a new teacher will be enough change to cope with for some!
- What are the general rules/expectations in terms of behaviour in the class? Are there any adaptations in place for some children?
- Are there any particular procedures in place for the pupil with ADHD? What are they? When are they enacted?
- Are there any other children in the class who receive additional support? What do you need to consider for including these children?
- Are there any other adults working in the class, either full-time or part-time i.e. co-teachers, SNAs etc? If so, how does this work? What is the role of the other adults in the classroom and what is the role of the teacher? Which children are receiving additional support from these adults and how is that organised?
- Observe the child with ADHD carefully. Observe the times when s/he is on-task and engaging appropriately. What is the context for that appropriate behaviour? What is happening at that time? What is the nature of the task / lesson that has grabbed their attention and is engaging them? If you observe challenging behaviour, note the context also i.e. what happened immediately before the incident, what was the nature of the challenging behaviour, how did the teacher deal with the behaviour and when/how did it subside? What lesson / task was happening when the challenging behaviour occurred? Use the same kind of thinking for children who might be particularly quiet or withdrawn for some/all of the day.

## Observation Notes





# The Child

Picture the room with 1000 T.Vs

That's what it feels like living as me,  
It's hard to concentrate on just one screen,  
The teacher doesn't get it, doesn't know what I mean.

I feel like there's always noise in my head,  
In school, on the yard, even alone in my bed,  
This noise is impossible to drown out,  
Can you blame me for sometimes wanting to shout?

I sit in my place looking at the task at hand,  
The others at my table are a 10 piece band,

I try and I try but they're so noisy,  
They're so distracting, but the teacher blames ME

I wish that the teacher would understand me,  
I wish for a day she could see what I see,

If only she knew what it's like in my head  
then at me she mightn't always see red.

So please, be patient, be relaxed, stay calm,  
Remember that this is who I really am,

I promise to try, as long as you do too,  
But this is ME just like you are you

# Explaining ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a medical/neurobiological condition which gives rise to a range of persistent challenges including difficulty sustaining attention, hyperactivity and impulsive behaviour.

## What it is like for a child with ADHD

- They can have difficulty with everyday situations e.g. schoolwork, relationships with others
- The symptoms of ADHD can impact on learning due to their inattention and impulsivity
- Many children face the challenge of other disorders such as emotional, learning and behavioural difficulties that are not directly related to ADHD but may interact with it to increase learning difficulties
- Life at home may be stressful, especially if they and their families do not receive all the help and support they require

Adapted from: HADD Ireland (ND)

## Children with ADHD may ...

- ... not have internal self-monitoring/regulation to concentrate on a task
- ... not hear/understand what is said to them
- ... not have the ability to ignore distractions
- ... have difficulty controlling their behaviour

## You need to remember that a child with ADHD may be ...

- **Curious:** not disruptive
- **Creative:** have difficulty controlling their behaviour
- **Energetic:** unaware of their distracting behaviour
- **Entertaining:** not purposefully trying to disrupt the class

## Children with ADHD perform better with teachers who are...

- **Flexible:** accommodate and support individuality
- **Consistent:** set tasks in steps with clear instruction
- **Organised:** clear routine and positive teaching environment
- **Hands-on:** provide a wide range of activities and set limits on student behaviour

Adapted from: Murdoch Children's Research Institute (ND)

# Teacher's Attitudes and Behaviour

**You** are in control and have the capacity to change the classroom environment, having an important impact on children's behaviour in school. When teaching children with ADHD, you must be aware of how your own thoughts, actions, attitudes and emotions impact how you respond to different situations. You should be attentive to the following when responding to challenging behaviour:

- Your tone of voice
- Your body language and what it is communicating
- Your own emotions: you may need to develop strategies for managing your own emotions so that you can act calmly and with control when responding to challenging behaviour
- Behaviours that 'push your buttons' and whether or not they warrant response
- The message the child's behaviour is communicating (e.g if a child leaves a task early does this imply that the task too hard for the child? Are they frustrated by the difficulty?)

## Responding to Behaviour

Attention to a behaviour is proven to lead to an increase in that behaviour. Consequently, the following approach is suggested:

- Teacher attention and praise for positive behaviour
- Ignore minor non-disruptive and attention-seeking behaviour
- Use incentives and rewards to inspire good behaviour
- A system to respond to misbehaviour

## **Teacher attention and praise**

Through praise and positive attention, children can learn behaviours that are valued by their teacher. Teachers should try to comment on three positive behaviours for every one time they have to comment on a negative behaviour. Praise should be: specific, genuine, sensitive.

## **Ignoring of minor non-disruptive and attention-seeking behaviour**

As already identified, responding to behaviours can reinforce them and their occurrence. Consequently, teachers must choose which behaviours should be ignored. Behaviours which should not be responded to include fidgeting that is not disruptive, impulsive call outs, irksome attention-pursuing behaviour that is not challenging.

## **Using incentives and rewards to encourage positive behaviour**

Some children do not respond well enough to praise by itself and so, they need rewards to influence their behaviour. Children should be able to link the reward to the desired behaviour. Reward systems can be introduced for a whole class, groups (such as tables) or individuals. In the case of a reward system for a child with ADHD it might be appropriate to have an individual reward system for them so as to target specific behaviours.

## **Responding to inappropriate behaviour**

- Praise the behaviour of a neighbouring child
- Walk toward the pupil
- Ignore non-disruptive behaviour that seeks to get your attention
- Re-direct the child
- Provide feedback or “check-in” with the child
- Warn the child of the consequence of the misbehaviour
- Allow the child compliance time
- Demonstrate consequence firmly and calmly

Adapted from: National Educational Psychological Service (2010)

# The Social and Learning Environment of the Class

For a child with ADHD, both the social and learning environments which are created in the classroom by the teacher are essential to their engagement within lessons, with peers and with teacher(s). You must ensure a classroom with clear expectations and routines to guarantee comprehension and participation. It is essential that you are clear in terms of social and learning goals. You should consider the following when encouraging an effective environment within the classroom:

## The Social Environment

Relationships, engagement and emotional competence of pupils with ADHD within the classroom are affected by the social environment which is created. Therefore, it is crucial that you have created a socially inclusive environment to cater for all pupils.

- Activities should be proactive and a varied approach should be taken, including individual, paired and group activities, each of which require clear guidelines, structures and parameters. This encourages peer engagement, developing relationships within the classroom.
- Classroom groupings: a system should be created by you in which you consider personalities and skills within the classroom, and group accordingly.
- Circle time can be implemented to employ an open environment in which issues that have arisen within the classroom can be discussed and resolved. Rules involving when to speak/ not to speak should be clearly laid out when implementing this strategy, and reminded regularly.
- Role-play can be a useful strategy to employ a positive social environment. The concept of friendship can be explored through this method.
- Positive classroom and playground behaviour must be recognised, highlighted and rewarded when seen in action.

## **The Learning Environment of the Class**

Learning expectations for a child with ADHD must be clear to ensure comprehension and engagement of the pupil.

- You should include activities in which stimulate pupils, to engage them. You need to recognise the strengths and abilities of the pupil and work with these. Their interests can be used in integration with the lesson to gain their attention and encourage comprehension. Children who are engaged in a lesson are less likely to participate in disruptive behaviour.
- Examination of the strengths of the pupils allows you to effectively differentiate lessons to cater for individuals' learning needs and creates a sense of achievement. You can use a pupil's strengths as a foundation to develop other areas of learning.
- Try to anticipate issues that may arise, plan for these, and reflect on them following the lesson. It is not possible to anticipate everything that will occur in every lesson, but some possibilities are foreseeable and it is better to plan for these than to wait until the lesson unfolds.
- Routines, expectations and rules must be clear and precise. A timetable for each day should be clearly displayed. Morning, lunch-time and evening routines should be consistent. Rules should be employed by the whole class and clearly displayed and reminded on a regular basis.

**Synthesised from: ADDitude (ND); HADD (ND); HADD (2005); LDOnline (ND); Train (2008); US Department of Education (ND)**

# Classroom Organisation

As a teacher who has a child with ADHD in your classroom, it is your responsibility to ensure you carry out all necessary actions to make sure the classroom suits the child's needs. There are a number of ways through which you can change your classroom organisation in order to cater for these needs:

- It is advisable to keep the child as close to your desk as possible. This will ensure that you can keep a close eye on them and keep them on task. It will also allow you to discreetly communicate with the child without drawing attention to him/her.
- Where possible the child with ADHD should always be placed amongst supportive and motivated peers and with his/her back to the rest of the class. This will benefit the child with ADHD because it will help to minimise the distractions of movement in the rest of the classroom and the other children will help maintain motivation.
- Try to avoid seating the child near distracting stimuli such as heaters, windows and doors as all of these can prove to be unnecessary distractions when the child is trying to focus on a task.
- Displays should be used to remind children of the rules, jobs and where possible, include a daily schedule. All displays you make should be similar in layout so as the child can interpret them easily.
- Create a designated area for resources and materials. Ensure that this area is kept clean and that all unnecessary materials are taken off the desk before moving on to the next lesson. A clean desk area will ensure that the child will not be distracted or begin fidgeting when concentrating on a task.
- Create a peaceful area in the classroom where the student can go if they become agitated; however, ensure that all students are allowed use this space as you do not want the child to feel singled out.

Synthesised from: HADD (ND); HADD (2005).



## Resources for classroom management and organisation

**Classroom rules display:** Displaying classroom rules visually will consolidate them as part of everyday routine. The display should include short, simple classroom rules which are easily comprehended and presented clearly. Rules should be phrased positively. Where possible, include the child in the development of the rules.

**Classroom schedule:** Including a visual, interactive classroom schedule can help make daily activities manageable, allows the child with ADHD to focus on one thing at a time.

**Classroom noise metre:** Having a class noise meter in use can benefit the child with ADHD as background noise can be a problem when they are working, by reducing the noise level in the classroom the child will be more at ease

**Rewards charts:** Every child is different some rewards will work better than others. Token or star charts can be effective because of their immediacy, students can see them accumulating on a chart, as visible evidence of achievement. A rewards system should be part of a wider system of praise and acknowledgement of good behaviour.

Remember to observe and clarify the procedures already in place in the classroom. Ask your host teacher if you are in doubt.

**Synthesised from: Everyday Health (2010); HADD (2005); Murdoch Children's Research Institute (ND)**

## Resources for Assessment

A range of different self-assessment strategies can be implemented to help the child with ADHD regulate their emotions and identify when they need help. The following resources may be of use for individual students:

**Traffic Lights:** The child with ADHD has three cards attached to the top of lollipop sticks on their table. The child can select the green, orange or red card, and place it upwards in front of them to signify if they are able to do the task, having some difficulties with the task, or feel they cannot do it. It is advisable to have three children in the class, preferably reliable peers of this child, to act as “traffic wardens” that can help the child if the traffic light in front of them identifies that help is required.

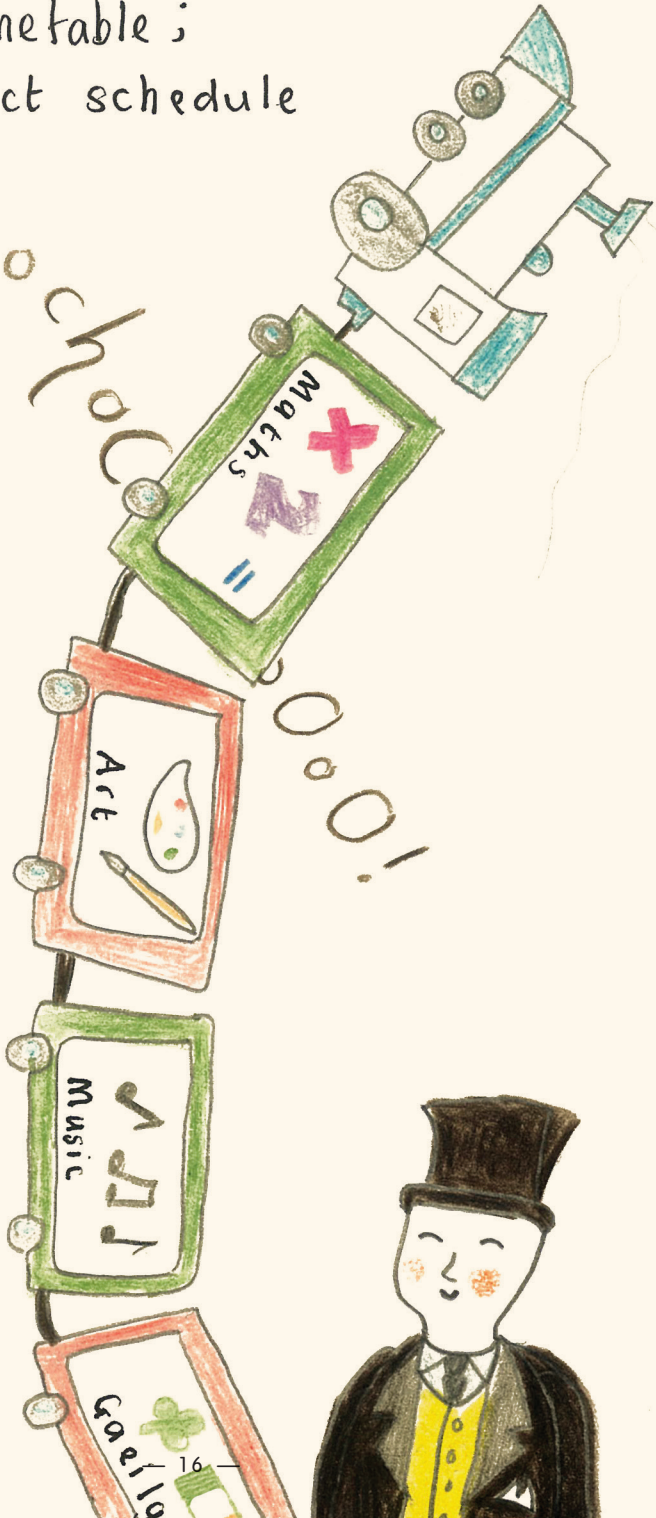
**Checklists:** The child can have a checklist in front of them to self-assess any aspect of their behaviour that the teacher identifies as relevant. For instance, the teacher might give a child a checklist that is split up into the three sections of the day with specific criteria listed such as “I stayed in my place. I put my hand-up when I had a question” etc.

**Visual representation of learning outcomes/intentions for the lesson(s):** As well as orally sharing the learning intentions for the lesson, use of a visual representation of the intentions or the arc of the lesson might be useful in scaffolding engagement because it will act as a point of reference for the pupils as well as you, the teacher. Further, if setting an independent or group task, a visual reminder of the stages of the task and the criteria for success may also scaffold learning in this context.

**Synthesised from: Everyday Health (2010); HADD (2005); Murdoch Children’s Research Institute (ND)**

A Daily Timetable;  
visual subject schedule

choochoo



choo!



Gaelic

# The Teacher

Stand back, breathe nice and slow,  
Catch that thought, now let it go.  
Close your eyes and count to three,  
Realise this is where you're meant to be.

You might not realise right away,  
The vital role you've been asked to play,  
For everything you do inside this room,  
Will help this child to grow and bloom.

If you're discouraged, disheartened, blue,  
Remember this isn't all about you,  
This is about the child you've been sent,  
It is your job to make them content.

Therefore, be kind, be patient, be true,  
Let the child be themselves and you be you.  
Realise the privilege you've been given.  
Stay patient. Stay calm. Stay cool. Stay driven.

Poem by: Alice, Catherine Mary, Eleanor, Johanna and Tara

## A Final Word

HADD-ADHD Ireland is delighted to help and support this important initiative. We would also like to highly commend all the students involved in the creation and delivery of this booklet, along with their lecturers and DCU. We expect this booklet will become a practical aid for teachers across Ireland for years to come.

ADHD is the most common presentation to the child mental health services in Ireland and children aged 8 - 10 years are the largest group receiving the diagnosis. The ability of teachers to identify the strengths and areas for development of this group of children is crucial so that they can adapt the learning environment to enable children to reach their full potential. Further, the assistance of teachers in helping those children to access a formal diagnosis cannot be overstated because a formal diagnosis provides a foundation of understanding for parents, teachers and the children themselves which, in turn, leads to better long-term life outcomes.

Whilst more and more children are getting the benefit of a diagnosis, research has shown that many children continue to slip through the net. With this booklet and the information it contains, we hope that you, the teachers of the future, will have a greater understanding of what ADHD is, how it affects your pupils and how you can best help to achieve their potential.

**Ken Kilbride**

CEO, HADD-ADHD Ireland

September 2018

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