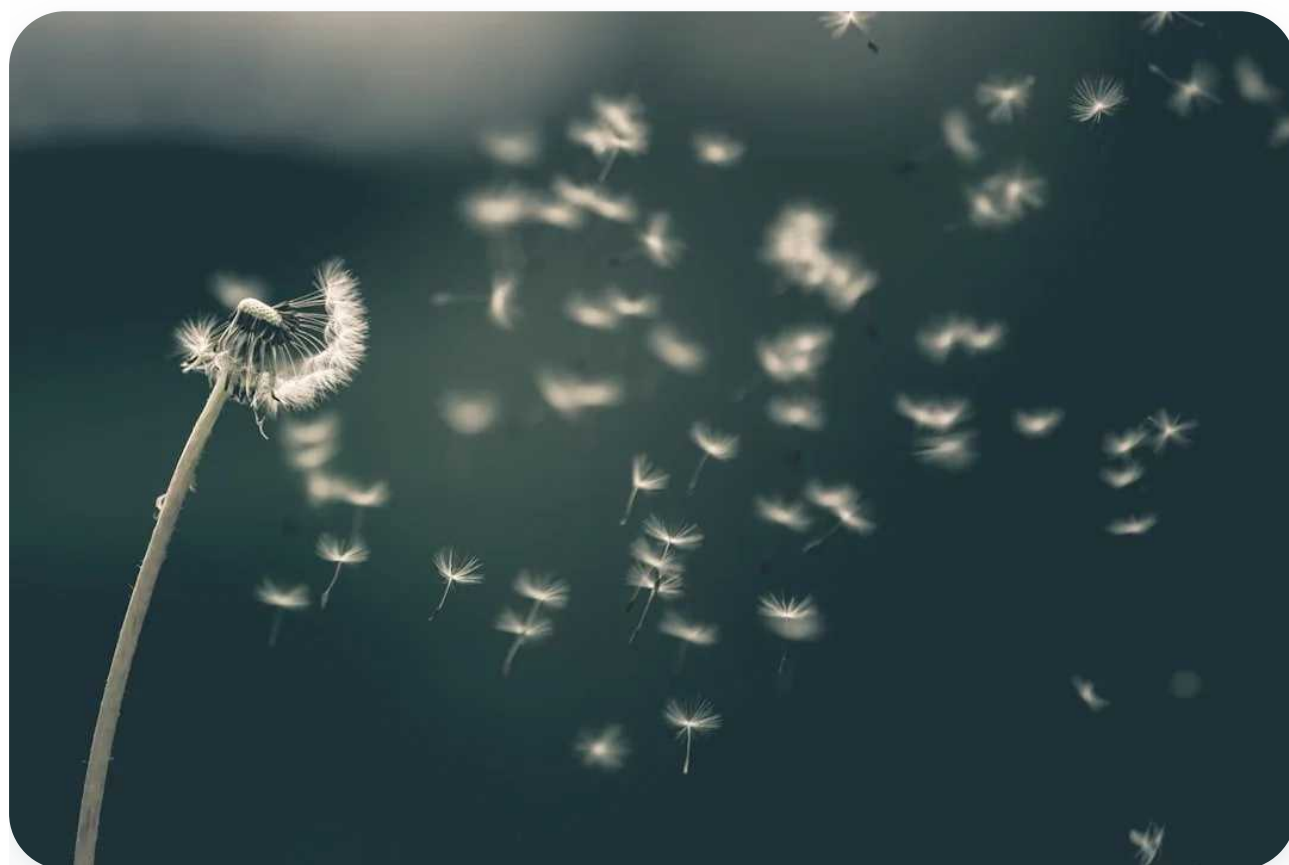


THE CHILD ADHD ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Chapter 3

Could this be my child?

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If you are looking for the signs of ADHD in children, you are probably weighing what you see against what you have read. That is a reasonable thing to do. This chapter describes how ADHD tends to show up at home and at school, why the same child can look so different in each, and what that gap can hide.

The same child, two different pictures

One of the most confusing things for parents is that home and school can describe two different children. A child who is calm and compliant in class may come home and fall apart, having spent all day holding themselves together. Another may be in constant trouble at school yet seem settled at home, where there is less to sit still for.

Neither picture is the whole truth, and neither is wrong. ADHD shows up where the demands are highest, and those demands differ from one setting to the next. This is exactly why a good assessment listens to more than one voice, including yours and the school's.

Why quieter children are missed

For a long time, ADHD was thought of as something that affected boys who could not sit still. Children who did not fit that picture, often quieter or more inattentive, were easy to overlook. They may daydream rather than disrupt, lose track rather than act out.

Some children also work hard to hold it together in public, then release everything in the safety of home. From the outside this can look like a behaviour problem that only happens with you. More often it is the cost of a long day of effort finally showing.

	At home	At school
Attention and focus	Forgets instructions, drifts off mid-task, homework takes hours.	Daydreams in class, misses what was just said, work left unfinished.
Activity and restlessness	Always on the go, struggles to settle at mealtimes or bedtime.	Fidgets, leaves their seat, finds sitting through lessons hard.
Impulsivity	Acts before thinking, interrupts, finds waiting a turn difficult.	Calls out answers, struggles to line up or wait, quick to react.
Organisation	Loses belongings, slow to get ready, needs many reminders.	Forgets kit and books, muddles timetables, work goes astray.
Emotions	Big feelings that arrive fast, meltdowns after a long day.	Easily frustrated, sensitive to correction, friendships can be bumpy.

How the same traits can surface differently at home and at school.

When home and school see different children

If the school says one thing and you see another, you are not imagining it, and neither are they. A child who copes all day at school may simply have nothing left by the time they get home. A child who struggles at school may have more freedom to move at home. Both views matter, which is why an assessment gathers information from both. Keeping a few notes on what you notice, and asking the school to do the same, gives a fuller, fairer picture.



It is the pattern that matters

When a single trait appears now and then, it means little. All children are restless, forgetful or distractible sometimes. What matters is the pattern: traits that have been there from early on, that show up in more than one setting, and that get in the way of learning, friendships or family life.

That pattern is often what parents sense long before anyone names it. Trusting that instinct enough to look further is not overreacting; it is paying attention.

As a child I was told to try harder, sit still, concentrate. No one asked why it was so hard. If a grown-up had been curious instead of cross, my whole childhood might have felt different.

Paul Fox, Co-founder of NeuroFX and ADHD UK Ambassador

Recognising the signs is not a diagnosis

If a lot of this sounds like your child, that is worth taking seriously. It is also not, on its own, a diagnosis. Many of these experiences overlap with anxiety, with changes at home or school, and with ordinary growing up. That is precisely why a careful assessment matters.

The next chapter looks honestly at [why an assessment can be worth it](#), and what a diagnosis can and cannot give your child.

Key takeaways

- ADHD often looks different at home and at school, and both views are part of the truth.
- Quieter, inattentive children are easily missed because they rarely disrupt a classroom.
- What matters is the pattern: long-standing traits, in more than one setting, that get in the way.
- Recognising the signs is a good reason to look further, but only an assessment can give an answer.

Common questions

Why does my child behave so differently at home and at school?

Because the demands differ. Many children hold themselves together all day at school and release it at home, while others find school harder than the freer setting of home. Both pictures matter, which is why an assessment gathers information from both.

The school is not worried, but I am. Should I still look into it?

Yes. Parents often notice a pattern before anyone else, and a child who copes at school may struggle most at home. Your view is valuable, and a good assessment takes it seriously alongside the school's.

Could this just be my child's age or personality?

It might be. All children are restless or distractible sometimes. ADHD is a persistent pattern that has been present from early on and affects more than one area of life, which is what an assessment is designed to explore.

I recognise a lot of this. What should I do next?

Take it seriously, but remember that recognising the signs is not a diagnosis. The next step is to read about your options and, if it feels right, arrange an assessment that can give a clear answer.

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This guide is general information, not a substitute for individual clinical advice, and it cannot diagnose ADHD or any other condition. If you are concerned about yourself or your child, please speak to your GP or arrange a professional assessment. NeuroFX is a CQC-registered clinic and our guidance follows NICE guideline NG87.