



Image created by Rosmarie Voegtli.

Tools for Schools: Development and early testing of a school-based toolkit to support children in school

Information Sheet for Parents, Guardians or Carers: Version 4 Jan 2022

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<http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/toolsforschools/>

Glossary

ADHD = Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

SEN(D)Co = Special Educational Needs (and Disabilities) Coordinator

TA = Teaching Assistant (also known as Learning Support Assistant, LSA)



Thank you for showing an interest in this research. It focuses on early testing of a school-based toolkit of behavioural strategies and adjustments. These will improve the school experience of students who are hyperactive, impulsive or have problems with attention, causing difficulties for the child at school.

You have received this information sheet after your child's school have approached you because they think your child might benefit from taking part in this research. Please take time to carefully read this leaflet so that you have the information you need or listen to the audio/video version here. You can also request a meeting with the research team or your school's SENCo to discuss what will happen in the study and if you would like further clarification on the overview of the toolkit and study protocols.

Do ask the research team any questions you have before signing the consent form for you or your child. It is important that you are comfortable for both you and your child to take part in this study. Any other parents, guardians or main carers of the child who might like to take part would also be welcome.

If you decide to participate, we thank you. If you choose not to, there is no disadvantage to you, and we thank you for considering our project.

Background and aims of this research study

Every classroom has at least one child (on average) who will struggle to sit still, pay attention and resist impulses to do things like jumping out of their seat. Strategies are needed to help teachers support these students, but current advice is often complicated, and no child is the same. This can lead to teachers struggling to develop the right strategies for each child.

In this project, we have worked closely alongside experts, teachers and parents to develop a prototype (early version) of a toolkit which includes a range of strategies for teachers to use to support school children. Your child's school has agreed to take part in this research already and think your child would suit this toolkit and research study, which is why we are contacting you. The toolkit will be used with your child for one school term, but we will be collecting information from you, your child and their teachers for one term before this and for one school term after the toolkit is tried.



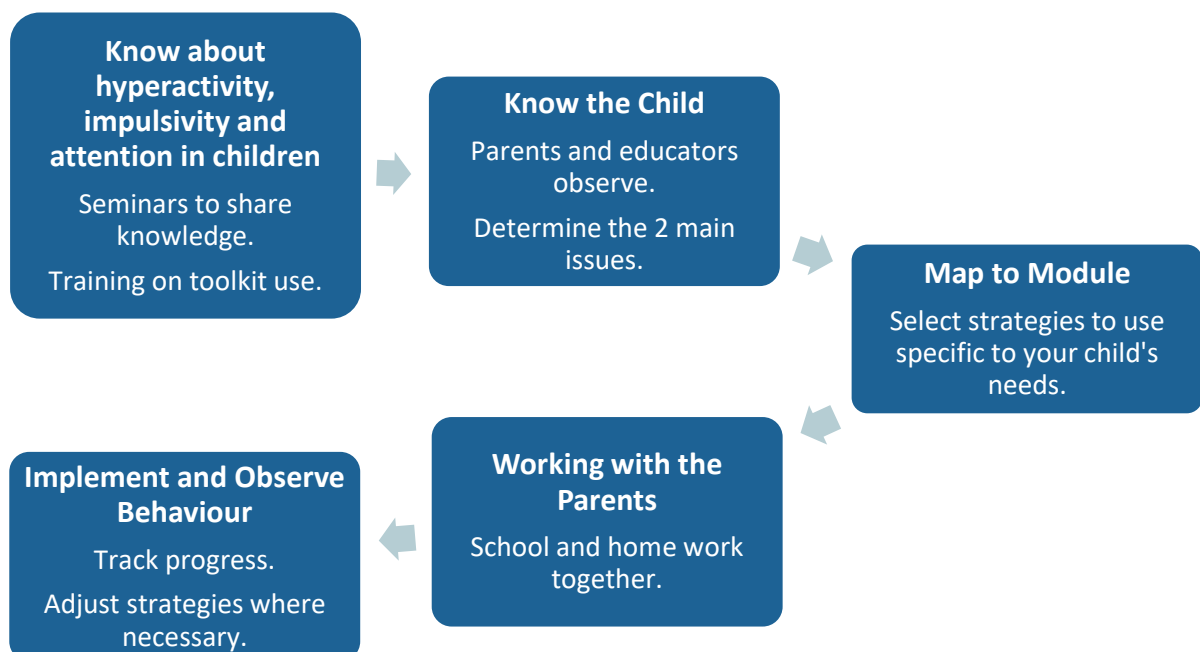
The aim of this current step of the study is to see if the toolkit is acceptable and practical to school staff, children and their parents. It is important to know that we are not trying to diagnose or “treat” your child. The toolkit is at an early stage, and we are not yet sure how much it will help. But we hope that in the future this toolkit will help children to have a better primary school experience.



Image created by woodleywonderworks.

Overview of the Tools for School toolkit

The Tools for Schools toolkit will be mainly digital (a website), with several key steps as shown below. We want the toolkit to support your child to remain in the classroom and allow them to access the same education and opportunities as their classmates. Your child’s SENCo, class teacher and teaching assistants will use the toolkit with your child in school. To keep you as parents ‘in the loop’ and to make the most of your knowledge of your child, you will be asked to join in for several parts of the toolkit. You can find out more information about the parts of the toolkit through the videos and descriptions on our website.



If you would like to find out more about any of these stages/the toolkit, please visit: <http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/toolsforschools/>



Your role in the research

As a parent, guardian or carer of a child using the Tools for Schools intervention, your role will include:

- Possibly completing a brief questionnaire to see if your child is eligible to take part.
- Watching an introductory video and completing training provided by the Tools for Schools research team.
- Completing questionnaires about the healthcare, education and social services you use to support your child, and your child's wellbeing and quality of life (both before and after the toolkit is used).
- Two or three interview conversations with research staff. It is up to you where these take place (e.g. over the phone/zoom, at home or another convenient location for you). These may be recorded
- Taking part in two meetings with your child's teacher and SENDCo to help identify what the toolkit should target to best support your child (you could join these online or in person).
- Working with your child and school staff to use strategies selected in the toolkit.
- Chatting to the research team over the phone about any good and bad things you are experiencing using the toolkit so we can make changes if need be. These may be recorded.
- Using a digital home-school notebook – this will allow you and your child's teacher to share information on your child's progress and ensure strategies are reinforced at home.
- Give the research team permission to collect information about your child from you, school staff and your child.

To show our gratitude, we will provide £20 to your family (£10 for you and £10 for your child) for participating in the interviews.



We would also like you to give the following permissions on behalf of your child:

- Permission for your child to participate in the research and try the strategies in the toolkit with school staff support.
- Permission for one of the research team to observe your child in school to see how their behaviour changes with different strategies (this will be done subtly without making your child stand out from their classmates and will not disrupt your child's school day).
- Permission for us to ask your child to complete two short age-appropriate questionnaires; one about how they feel about their school, and one about their quality of life (twice during the research study).
- Permission to keep records/photographs of your child's work
- Permission for the research team to conduct an 'active interview' (such as playing together or doing an activity) at home or another suitable location with your child, finding out more about whether they liked or disliked the toolkit strategies. You, another parent/guardian or a sibling can join the child for this if they want you to.

What does your child need to know?

Your child should understand that they are participating in research but it is up to you how much you want to tell them. The toolkit is being tried as part of the usual school day, with SENCOs and teachers working to support children in school as usual, so your child need not know that they are doing something new or different if you think this will make them uncomfortable.

We will need your consent for your child to participate, and their verbal agreement that they are happy to take part in a research study and to complete questionnaires. We want to ensure we are mindful of your child's "emotional thermometer" and will not be making your child do something they do not want to do. To achieve this, we will discuss with you the best way to get permission from your child to take part in certain strategies in a way that you and your child are happy with.



Potential Benefits

Benefits for your child include improving their relationship with their teacher and making school a more positive experience for them through:

- School staff and parents becoming better informed about how to work with children who struggle with attention, impulsiveness, or hyperactivity and what it is like for families and children living with children who have issues with this (sometimes diagnosed as ADHD).
- Improvement in teachers' awareness about attention, impulsiveness, or hyperactivity in the classroom.
- Giving teachers easy-to-use strategies to better identify and support students with their attention, impulsiveness, or hyperactivity

Benefits for you include:

- Picking up some tips from the strategies that may help you and your family at home
- Improve your communication with your child's school through the home-school notebook

We hope that access to the Tools for Schools toolkit will help your child's school experience and relationships with school staff. However, the main aim of this study is to test a prototype before it is tried with a wider range of schools and children. In the long run, we hope this will improve support (mostly at school, but also at home) for many children in education.

Potential Unintended Consequences

It is possible that the toolkit may lead to children feeling singled-out from their peers due to being treated differently. We aim to avoid this and any other negative impacts wherever possible so please talk to us about any concerns you may have. Via the toolkit children in the study will hopefully develop social skills and greater self-esteem which may help them build stronger relationships with other children. However, you and your child are free to withdraw at any time if you or they wish to.

Possible negative impacts of the toolkit will be monitored throughout the study and school staff will follow a defined procedure for reporting any negative impacts as soon as possible after they come to light. The research team will abide by any existing safeguarding protocols your child's school has as well.



Should a child or other participant of the study report severe worsening of symptoms or distress, you will be informed and the use of the toolkit with your child will be temporarily stopped. From there the lead researcher (Dr Abby Russell) will consult with members on the study advisory board to decide on the most appropriate course of action. This can include: a clinician speaking directly to you and the school to see whether the negative effects are caused by the toolkit or research study or are external to this; your child and family withdrawing from the study; or individual plans being put in place to monitor and manage the situation.

Withdrawing your consent

- You (and anyone else involved) may withdraw from participation in the study without needing to provide a reason at any point.
- You can choose to withdraw you or your child's participation and/or any data you and they have provided.
- Data can only be removed so long as the withdrawal is done before the data is anonymised, as at this point, we will not know which information is linked to your individual child.
- Should you withdraw from the study due to negative effects, your existing data will not be used unless you give us consent at the time that you withdraw.
- Your child will be able to continue to access the prototype intervention (as long as the study team are confident that this is not the cause of adverse effects) if they wish.

Confidentiality and data protection

The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University will endeavour to be transparent about its processing of your personal data and this information sheet should provide a clear explanation of this. If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing informationgovernance@exeter.ac.uk or at <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/ig/>



The data we will collect from you includes recordings of your interviews with the research team, notes taken by the interviewer at the time and any questionnaires that we ask you to complete. The data we will collect from your child includes a recording of their active interview, any questionnaires they complete and information from observing them at school.

Recordings will be written down word for word and anonymised before being analysed along with other interviews we are conducting. The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only the researchers working on the project can access it. In the interview if you feel uncomfortable, you will be reminded of your right to not answer any particular question(s).

The results of this project may be published, but any data included will not be individually identifiable – so nobody will know which schools or children took part. A summary of the study findings will be sent to you. You will be provided with a copy of your interviews as well if you wish. Additionally, the anonymised data you provide may be used other related research – however this is optional.

Funding

This research is funded by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR): the research arm of the NHS. Specifically, it is funded by an Advanced Fellowship – Stage 2, Dr Abigail Russell, NIHR300591. The funding currently covers the project for 5 years, which began in July 2020.

Ethical approval

This study has received ethical approval from the University of Exeter College of Medicine and Health Research Ethics Committee (reference Jan22/B/300).



Contact details

If you have any questions about the Tools for Schools project, either now or in the future, please feel free visit [our website](#) for further information, or to contact Abby directly, who leads the research team:

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Complaints

If you have any complaints about the way in which this study has been carried out, please contact the Chair of the University of Exeter Medical School Research Ethics Committee:

cmhethics@exeter.ac.uk

