

# Higher levels of inattention at age 7 linked with lower GCSE grades

April 30 2015

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New research has shown that children who display increasing levels of inattention at the age of seven are at risk of worse academic outcomes in their GCSE examinations.

Researchers at the Universities of Nottingham and Bristol studied more than 11,000 children as part of the research which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and is published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*.

The findings of the research have a range of implications for parents, teachers and clinicians.

The research was led by Kapil Sayal, Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in the School of Medicine at The University of Nottingham. Professor Sayal said: "Teachers and parents should be aware of the long-term academic impact of behaviours such as [inattention](#) and distractibility. The impact applies across the whole spectrum of scores at the population level and is not just confined to those scoring above a cut-off or at the extreme end.

"Prevention and intervention strategies are key and, in the teenage years, could include teaching students time-management and organisational skills, minimising distractions and helping them to prioritise their work and revision."

The results of the study are based on the analysis of behavioural and

academic data of participants in Children of the 90s, a population-based study at The University of Bristol.

Parents and teachers completed detailed questionnaires when the children were seven years old to assess a variety of different behaviours including inattention, hyperactivity/impulsivity and oppositional/defiant problems. This information was compared with the [children](#)'s academic achievements by looking at their GCSE results at [age](#) 16.

After taking into account factors such as IQ and parental education and social class, the researchers found that for every one-point increase in inattention symptoms at age seven, across the whole sample, there was a two to three point reduction in GCSE scores and a 6 to 7 per cent increased likelihood of not achieving a minimum level of five 'good' GCSE grades (A\* to C) at age 16. This relationship was linear—each one-point increase in inattention symptoms increased the risk of worse academic outcomes across the full range of inattention scores in the sample.

When the researchers took inattention into account, the study also found that, in boys, oppositional/defiant behaviours at age seven pose an independent risk to academic achievement.

Provided by University of Nottingham

Citation: Higher levels of inattention at age 7 linked with lower GCSE grades (2015, April 30) retrieved 24 April 2024 from

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