

You Can... Use signs and symbols to save airspace

If we want children to listen to us, we have to be careful how we use our voices – putting some information into the visual field frees up the airspace for more important information.

Thinking points

- While repetition is of the essence in terms of children's learning, it is their repetition that counts, not yours. If you repeatedly explain aspects of class organisation or nag children about aspects of behaviour, they will learn to switch off, because this is not the sort of thing that motivates them. You want them to associate your voice with interesting, relevant listening experiences, not miserable ones.
- Contemporary children, brought up in a multimedia society, tend to find visual cues easy to remember, so they are a very helpful aid to classroom management.

Tips, ideas and activities

- Keep your voice for the listening activities that matter. Use visual alternatives to cover more workaday aspects of classroom life, such as organisation and behaviour management, for example:
 - use actions like holding up both hands and wiggling fingers (*Show me ten*) to tell children that silence is required – as they see you, they mimic your movements and fall silent
 - hold up or point to pictures, signs and symbols to remind children of behavioural rules, rather than repeatedly explaining or nagging.

- Make a visual timetable (see illustration) to show the events of the school day. Each day, attach cards with pictures/symbols in L>R sequence to indicate the events children can expect during that section of the day. Cue cards on photocopiable page 61 include activity symbols (going out to play, putting on coats, storytime, PE and changing for PE) and behaviour management cards (sit down, be quiet, look at the teacher and put up your hand). Encourage the children to keep an eye on the timetable so they are mentally prepared for each event. Boys particularly find it reassuring to know what is coming next.

- Use symbols for behaviour management, for example:

- pictures or coloured cards you can carry with you, like a football referee, and show to rule-breakers (when someone is not attending, catch his eye by waving the 'Look at the teacher' card)
- a puppet or soft toy who signals distress at particular behaviour (*Oh, I think Lola's upset about something. What do you think it is?*). Ros Bayley's *How to help Young Children to Listen* (Lawrence Education) provides many good ideas in this respect.

What are we going to do today?

BREAK

LUNCH

HOMETIME
