

Advice Sheet 17

DIRECTIVE STATEMENTS

Directive statements are effective ways of getting our message across if we use them appropriately. Some guidelines include:

1. Give **positive** rather than negative statements.
 - Say *"walk on the footpath, thanks"* instead of *"don't walk on the road"*
 - Say *"it's task time now – please start your work"* rather than *"stop fooling and get on with it"*
 - Say *"put your hand up if you want to say or ask something"* rather than *"no talking"*
2. Keep the statement **clear** and **simple**.
 - Use the 'rule of 5' principle – only use five words per sentence / instruction: Say *"put the phone away – thanks"*
 - Avoid multiple commands e.g. *"get out your maths book and maths sets, page 34, numbers 3-5"*. If you need to give multiple instructions, write them on board or give one / two at a time.
3. Use **'thanks'** to convey an expectation that the request will be complied with.
 - *"Settling down, thanks"*
 - *"Looking this way, thanks"*
4. Get pupils' **attention** first, then continue with the direction.
 - *"James, (pause and wait for acknowledgement) sit down please"*.
5. Have some **catch phrases** to get across key routines:
 - *"four on the floor"* – to get pupils to sit properly with all four chair legs on the ground
 - *"hands up if you're listening"* – to bring pupils back to whole-class listening from group work
 - *"give of your best"* – motivate pupils to do the best they can do, to compete against only themselves
6. If a pupil is **agitated** / starting to get aggressive:
 - Lower your own tone / volume
 - Speak slowly, clearly, calmly but assertively.
 - Use the 'broken record' technique: repeat the instruction calmly if it has not been heeded.
 - Offer choice to the pupil: *"you can choose to continue this behaviour or to get back to work. I hope you can make the correct choice"*
7. Give **wait time** to the pupil – avoid criticising the pupil for not complying absolutely immediately with the request. Avoid *"do what you're told and do it now!"*
8. Give **specific praise** or a non-verbal **affirming gesture** (e.g. nod, thumbs up) to the pupil once s/he complies with your direction. *"Thanks Jane, I'm glad you're getting on with your work. Well done"*.