

Advice Sheet 27

NOISE LEVELS: CONTROLLING VOICE

Adult voice

Our own voice as the adult in the classroom can be a contributing factor to calm or to chaos. Where possible, shouting is best avoided, both for the level of calm and for our own health. In particular it's best avoided when we are trying to deal with inappropriate behaviour as it may 'add fuel to the fire' when a pupil is already agitated or angry.

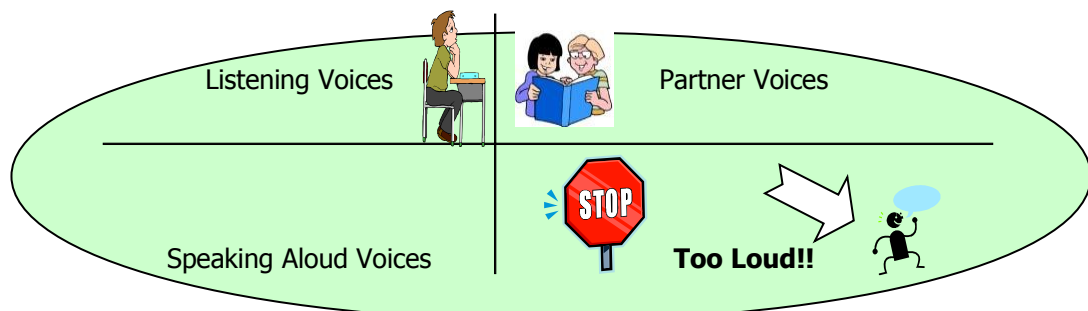
Things we might need to consider about voice are:

- What is my own volume, speed, pitch?
- Have I variation in my tone of voice for different modes of teaching / subjects: what's my voice like for whole-class instruction / checking on group work / one-to-one?
- What's my voice like at the start / middle and end of a lesson? Does it increase / decrease in speed, volume or pitch?

Pupil voice

This is one of the things that can distract us most – it may not even be the infrequent loud outburst but the level of constant chatter that may be symptomatic of inattention. We need to decide on what is our own comfort level with pupil voices in the classroom. This will depend on the age of the pupils and on the number of pupils in the classroom. It is probably best to explain to pupils that in whole-class discussion or instruction time only one voice can be allowed at any one time, and to develop a mechanism for pupils to ask for permission to speak. If class are working in groups or are doing on-task work where they may need to work together or check with each other, then 'partner voices' might be considered appropriate. We may need to model / demonstrate what this sounds like and what it does not sound like with the class.

One way of alerting pupils as to what type of voice is appropriate for a particular activity is to use a Noise Meter. Something like this may be effective:



Also see: <http://www.classsource.com/teacheraids/> (Yacker Tracker traffic light noise meter)
<http://www.multiage-education.com/multiagen-b/noisemeter.html>