

Classroom strategies for developing attention and listening skills

Use **class rules** such as good looking / good listening / good sitting / good waiting/ good turn taking. Remind children of these often. **Praise children** when they remember and follow the rules.

- sessions **little and often** work best
- gain **eye contact** with the child before giving them an instruction
- for small children, get down to the **child's level**
- say the **child's name** to gain their attention before giving an instruction
- **slow down** your rate of speech and use pauses. **Allow time** for slower responding pupils to process instructions / questions
- when speaking to a group of children you may need to **repeat** the instruction to an individual child
- **minimise noise** and visual distractions eg, hide toys, cover wall displays, ask not to be disturbed by other staff members, turn off TV or music etc
- use **gestures** and **objects** as cues to gain the child's attention and help them to understand
- use **simple sentences**. Break down instructions into smaller parts, eg, 'go and put your coat on and go outside with Kate to play' becomes:
 - o 'put your coat on' (wait until this is done)
 - o 'go outside to play'
- in the classroom try to **alternate between** listening / quiet tasks and more active ones (allow energy release between activities e.g. outdoor play)
- remember children will find it difficult to follow instructions if they are focused on an activity
- set manageable goals. Ensure the previous task is completed before giving a new one. For children who are struggling to maintain their attention, introduce **start/finish boxes**. A reward is given if all the activities are achieved
- set **time limits** for children to complete tasks (make these more achievable to start with). Use a timer of some sort to help the children be visually aware of the progress of time eg, sand timer
- **use motivating toys** as this will encourage the children to attend for longer. Be wary of using too many exciting materials. These can become distractions. Make sure you have these organised before you start
- sit the child **near** to the front / teacher

Reproduced with kind permission from Children's Speech and Language Therapy Services - Leeds Community Healthcare.

If you would like this information in another format, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email wcnt.yourexp@nhs.net

© Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust

July 2019 V2