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"Before You Speak" cheat sheet — signal → pause → instead

For teachers · an A4 card for your planner or desk · the three BEFORE YOU SPEAK boxes from the programme book — in the book's own words

> Three heated moments in which the first impulse usually makes things worse. The same pattern repeats in each of them: **SIGNAL** (how I know that emotions are starting to take over) → **PAUSE** (stopping my own impulse — sometimes one breath is enough, sometimes safety and time to cool off have to come first, before the pupil is ready to talk) → **INSTEAD** (what to say instead of the first impulse).

1. When you feel like the class is "winning"

SIGNAL	PAUSE	INSTEAD
A racing pulse, a raised voice, the thought "I'll show them". It is a sign that the wave of emotion is starting to hijack you too — and that is exactly what part of the class is waiting for.	One calm breath and a moment of silence. A teacher's silence can be louder than shouting.	Instead of "Do you always have to...!": a calm, short reminder of a rule from the charter — **"A reminder: in our class we speak one at a time"** — and a return to the lesson, without commenting on the provocation.

2. When a pupil is "boiling over"

SIGNAL	PAUSE	INSTEAD
The pupil accepts no arguments, reacts instantly, louder and more forcefully — the first stage of arousal has not yet passed.	Safety first, and time to cool off — for the pupil and for you.	Instead of demanding instant remorse, you can say directly: **"Sit down, get on with the lesson. We will talk about your behaviour later, because right now I am too upset. I would not want to say anything unfair or hurtful. You will cool off, I will cool off, and we will come back to it."** And we really do come back to the conversation once the emotions have subsided.

3. When someone swears in a lesson

SIGNAL	PAUSE	INSTEAD
The first reflex is to judge the person — "as usual...", "you again...". That path cements the pupil in the role they are playing right now.	A second to separate the person from the situation.	Instead of judging the person — a sentence about the situation: **"We do not swear in my lessons."** I may disagree with the pupil, I may be outraged by their behaviour, but I say: "what you did today was not wise", and not: "as usual, you have done something stupid".

One rule underneath it all

One of the simplest helpful responses to provocation can be this: **do not give the class the show it is waiting for.** If what keeps the disruption going is the teacher's annoyance, a calm and predictable response can gradually extinguish it. If the problem persists nonetheless, calm is no substitute for working out what really keeps the behaviour going — and talking about what happened makes sense only once everyone has settled, including both yourself and the pupil.

More in the programme book — topics: the class is pushing me over the edge · slowing a pupil down before an outburst · the pupil who swears and shows contempt · the conversation after cooling off

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