Park Lane International School

Creating a scalable, plug-in-and-play microphone solution for multiple classrooms

Like many other educational institutions, **Park Lane International School** was forced to dramatically depart from its typical teaching practices in 2020. Keeping students and staff safe during the pandemic meant having to adapt learning to take place remotely.

In response to the evolving epidemiological situation, the school implemented various attendance models to ensure education could continue uninterrupted:

→ **Rotating classes** - students take turns attending in-person/remotely.

→ **Fully remote** - everyone connecting remotely from the safety of their own homes.

→ **Hybrid classrooms** - some students join in person, others connect remotely for the same class.

For teachers, this meant getting acquainted with new technologies. While most have no trouble hosting a Zoom call, more advanced hybrid classroom set-ups with additional screens and classroom microphones did pose challenges for nearly everyone.

In this case study, we look at 3 acute challenges that arose following Park Lane's shift to remote and hybrid teaching and why they chose **Catchbox Plus** as the preferred solution for their classrooms.

Three challenges to tackle

Park Lane's IT manager **Jakub Svovry** is responsible for ensuring the school's tech is up to scratch and conducive to an ideal learning environment. As part of his role, he is the sole person responsible for IT across all Park Lane campuses.
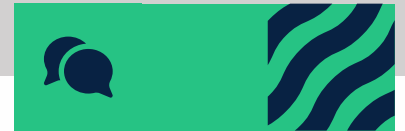
Herein lies the first challenge - Jakub cannot be everywhere at once and hence the responsibility for any in-class tech set-up falls on the teacher's shoulders. Park Lane assigned mentorship roles for the more tech-savvy educators, so they can assist other staff when possible. However, anything too technical becomes disruptive for everyone involved, taking away teacher time from what matters most - educating the students.

The second challenge relates to audio quality. Even though Park Lane's hybrid classroom set-ups involve multiple screens, including a smartboard and a projection screen, it is all for naught if audio quality is poor; if the student cannot clearly hear the teacher, then it's impossible for them to participate in the class. **"The key thing is that students can hear the teacher. Everything else is secondary,"** explains Jakub.

The third challenge is ensuring communication between remote and in-class students. Peer interaction is one of the elements that has suffered the most in light of the pandemic and teachers have observed that students are anxious for things to go back to normal, primarily because they miss their friends.

"We needed a simple audio solution that's easy to use, is of great quality, and enhances the overall classroom experience", summarizes Jakub, **"and this is why we chose Catchbox Plus."**

The solution: Catchbox Plus for the classroom

The **Catchbox Plus system** met all the criteria set out by Jakub and Park Lane management.

The system consists of two wireless microphones - the wearable **Presenter mic** and the throwable Audience mic, In the classroom, teachers wear the presenter mic to provide clear, high-quality audio to remote students. If a particular class is using a **hybrid model**, students can also use the Audience mic to share ideas between those in the classroom and those at home.

Above all, the simplicity of the Catchbox plus system made it the obvious choice for Jakub and Park Lane. The Plus system is 'plug-and-play' meaning there's no need for an advanced technical setup. In-fact, the receiver can be plugged directly into a computer's USB port and then connected to zoom by selecting "Catchbox" as the audio input in the app.

"There's no messing about with wires, no charging the receiving station, you don't have to adjust any frequencies", Jakub notes. **"When the mic is on, it's on, and when it's off, it's off."**

All of this, along with offering superior sound quality, made Catchbox stand out among other solutions for Jakub and Park Lane.

Additionally, having a uniform set-up across classes means any teacher can walk into any class and start hybrid teaching immediately, without having to trouble the school's IT department.

The students love it just as much as the teachers do. Kids who were joining the class remotely could interact with their friends in the classroom, and the in-class students found great pleasure in throwing the wireless foam microphone around.

One eye on the future

Many schools are on the fence about investing in technology for remote and hybrid teaching because they hope things will soon go back to normal with students returning to classrooms. However, as the pandemic extends into its second year, it's increasingly unclear when exactly that might be.

Teachers are experiencing a lot of stress and students are suffering academically due to suboptimal teaching conditions. As such, using technology can help improve the situation until normalcy returns.

Park Lane views the technology as an investment into a post-pandemic future. For one, students who wouldn't be able to attend classes due to long-term absence will now be able to participate remotely and not miss out on education and peer interaction.

Park Lane sees a place for Catchbox in school assemblies and presentations, as well as for remote communication during events that involve its several campuses.

Engaged students, satisfied parents

Since the beginning, many parents have been worried about the impact of remote learning on student performance and wellbeing. Educational institutions worldwide are facing calls for refunds and schools find themselves under increasing scrutiny regarding the quality of virtual classes versus in-person teaching.

Using technology to make the most out of the current remote model is hence appreciated by parents of Park Lane students. It shows proactiveness on the school's part to deal with today's challenges by using the best tools out there and it allows the school to positively stand out from the rest.

Indeed, Catchbox even works as a marketing element - it's innovative, it looks cool, and it can be branded with the school's logo. It has made its way into Park Lane's marketing

materials and the message is clear - we're innovative and doing everything in our power to ensure your kids get the best education possible, given the circumstances.

Final remarks

Thanks to Jakub's efforts, the teachers of Park Lane can focus on teaching, without struggling through technical set-ups or having to call colleagues for help.

"Simplicity is essential", concludes Jakub. Simple solutions like plug-and-play microphones help teachers feel comfortable with tech. In contrast, complicated set-ups can alienate teachers and lead them to view technology as disruptive for the classroom, rather than a helpful tool that can enhance remote and hybrid education for students and teachers alike.

Indeed, this positive experience with technology has allowed Park Lane teachers to fully embrace it and even start looking for additional ways technology can help improve the classroom experience. For instance, many teachers are now inquiring about document cameras seeing their added value in improving the way information is shared with students.

Though it's not certain when in-person teaching will resume at Park Lane, it's clear that technology will play a key role in the reintegration of staff and students. With **Catchbox Plus** installed across Park Lane's campuses, Jakub and the rest of the school staff are confident they are well prepared for whatever the future holds.