



# SUCCESS STORY

## CHESNUT LODGE INCREASES INCLUSIVITY WITH ACTIVOTE

Chesnut Lodge is a special school for children with complex physical and medical needs. With a school roll aged two to 16, Chesnut Lodge pioneers teaching techniques designed to help its students get more out of the learning experience and raise their level of achievement.

### WHAT WAS NEEDED?

Already realising the benefits of using Promethean's Activprimary to support lesson delivery, Liam Dowling, assistant headteacher at Chesnut Lodge, was keen to extend classroom interactivity by introducing a learner response system.

Having visited the British Educational Teaching Technology (BETT) exhibition several times before, Liam knew that this would be the ideal place to research the latest in interactive response solutions.

Understanding the motor skill challenges which many of his students face, as well as wanting to minimise any additional planning demands placed on teachers, Liam had a number of criteria against which to evaluate the various systems demonstrated at the show.

The requirements were clear. Any learner response system had to be easy for students to manipulate and be bright and visual, to help maintain their attention for longer periods. Liam was also looking for a system that was durable and could withstand the rough and tumble synonymous with a lively teaching environment.

He explains: "We knew from the word go that any learner response system we chose would have to be robust enough to cope with accidental dropping and have buttons sufficiently large for our students to be able to see and operate."



## THE SOLUTION

Exploring the range of systems demonstrated at BETT, Liam was particularly interested in Promethean's Activote.

Liam was not only impressed by the design of the Activote handsets, feeling that they would be easy for the students to use, he also saw a benefit in that the system could be used with their existing Activprimary flipchart resources.

He continues: "The Activote pods stood out from the crowd as being ergonomically designed and thoughtfully developed specifically for children. Other systems I had seen looked more like a remote control, with really tiny buttons. These would have been impossible for our students to use."

While Liam was already keen to introduce the standard Activote system to Chesnut Lodge, which plugs into Activprimary or Activstudio software and is supplied with 32 handheld pods, he was sure of his decision when he learnt of the new Activote VR.

Activote VR is a software version of the system, which is installed onto hardware such as networked desktops or laptops. This enables voting sessions to be held in the absence of, or in conjunction with, the traditional Activote pods. Convinced of the benefits to a special school environment, Liam arranged to implement a mixture of the traditional Activote with Activprimary and new Activote VR.

"The only means of communicating for some of our students is to use a communication device, which can generate speech. Activote VR allows these children to participate in a session using their communication devices while others can use the standard Activote pods. The two work seamlessly together, making it the only solution that allows us to engage with all of our students in an interactive session."



"THE ACTIVOTE PODS  
STOOD OUT FROM  
THE CROWD"

## THE VERDICT

To introduce interactive learner response to students at Chesnut Lodge, Liam organised a number of whole school activities – starting with a series of Chesnut Lodge quiz assemblies and a Fame Academy competition. Creating a real stir of excitement, as well as proving to Liam that the students could effectively use Activote, the fun activities were soon moved on to support the delivery of the national curriculum.

Liam elaborates: “Using the system in assembly allowed the students to see how the technology works – and rewarded them by instantly displaying the results. They loved it.”

In terms of academic assessment, the use of Activote has made a significant and positive impact, engaging every student in the room and enabling truly group based assessment. Rather than having to rely entirely on small step assessment or making judgements based on a single outcome the child can produce, Activote enables all children to use a common vehicle for response.

“Activote VR has enabled us to bridge a gap amongst students. Physical and learning disabilities may prevent some children from completing verbal or written tests but all of our children have been able to participate in Activote assessments.

“From the teacher’s perspective, this is invaluable as it not only creates a truly inclusive environment, it makes it easy to identify if an individual is experiencing difficulties with a particular topic. We simply hold an assessment in anonymous mode, but can identify the student using a specific registered pod. In doing so, the teacher can gain insight critical to supporting ongoing development.”

Activote has made a tangible difference to teaching and learning at Chesnut Lodge, facilitating greater interaction and collaboration than had previously been possible. Committed to improving on this, Liam is working with Promethean to provide feedback on how the system could be adapted in the future to be even more inclusive in a special needs setting.

He concludes: “As a school we are constantly developing ways to better support our children in the learning environment and technology is a great facilitator for this. One of the reasons we chose Promethean, in addition to the undisputed educational benefits of its interactive teaching solutions, was the company’s commitment to collaborating with us to develop the hardware further for special needs students.”

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