



Ascom Goes Back to School

Founded in 1889, the Old Palace School in Croydon is steeped in history dating back to the 15th Century when its Chapel, Great Hall and Library were built. In recent years the school has expanded and built several modern, purpose-built facilities including laboratories, a heated indoor swimming pool, and a new block of classrooms.

With the growth of the school, it became apparent that the existing telephone system was unable to cope with the extra demands placed on it. For example, the caretaker, IT manager and nurse are all mobile staff who often need to be contacted quickly, but on such a large site, this had become an increasingly difficult task. Also, incoming call traffic increased significantly with the growth in pupil numbers, putting an additional burden on the school switchboard. So the Old Palace School investigated a new telephone system that would cope with the new demands and be adaptable for future developments.



The Old Palace School, Croydon

David Poole, the Old Palace School bursar said, "With the Ascotel ISDN telephone system from Ascom we found an ideal solution that would incorporate all our needs, from providing cordless communications to integrating our voice and data requirements. Other important factors that had to be met included easy to use handsets, reliability and a system that would be easily and quickly adaptable. We chose Ascom as we were impressed with the whole package, from the flexibility of the system to the complete project management of the installation and high level of service and support they are able to provide."

Ascom recommended the latest Ascotel ISDN system with over 50 Office telephones for all the key areas including school offices, classrooms and staff rooms, plus a number of Ascotel 130 DECT cordless telephones for staff who need to remain in contact at all times. The Ascotel system was configured with Voicemail and out of hours Auto Attendant as well as Direct Dial Inwards (DDI) lines to ensure calls can be routed directly to departments and staff if required.

By converting its lines over to ISDN the Old Palace School was able to optimise its line usage, increase the speed of internet access and reduce costs.

DECT Cordless Phones Guarantee On-site Communication

Ascotel's DECT cordless telephones seamlessly integrate into the main system enabling staff such as the caretaker, nurse and IT manager to always remain in contact and make and receive calls from anywhere on the school site. A number of important features are also available, including Vibracall and/or LED display to alert the user of a call if in a situation where discretion is required. In some situations, particularly for the caretaker, a truly hands-free method of making or taking calls is necessary, for this the Office 130 DECT telephones offer a hands-free option with belt clip and optional headset.



Ascotel and ISDN Ensure Parents Always Get Through

Many of the Old Palace School's teachers have opted to have their own direct number (DDI) and voicemail so parents and pupils can contact them direct with queries. If teaching and unable to respond they can easily access their messages and return calls as soon as they can. For callers who prefer to speak to a 'real' person rather



than leave a message on voicemail the Ascotel system operates 'group hunting', this means that if the caller dials the main number and the receptionist cannot take the call, the system will automatically ring the next available extension.

Improved Security

As with most schools, security has become an important issue. Before the installation of the Ascotel system, all enquiries at the reception and headmistress's doors meant opening the locked door to speak to the unknown visitor, running the risk that the caller was not who they said they were. The Ascotel ISDN system incorporates an intercom facility, enabling staff to assess who the visitor is before unlocking the door. In addition, as many enquiries do not need a face to face discussion, the intercom allows the visitor to ask his/her question, receive an immediate answer and go on their way, saving both the staff and visitors valuable time.

ISDN Capability for Fast Internet Access

ICT (Information & Computing Technology) including internet access is an important part of the school's curriculum and speedy access to the World Wide Web is vital. Using ISDN through the Ascotel system, internet access and sending email is much quicker with the added benefit of making it significantly cheaper. In addition, ISDN allows a dedicated line to the examination board.

Auto Attendant Handles Calls Out of Hours

Out of school hours or in the unlikely event that no one can answer an

incoming call during school hours, the Ascotel system's Auto Attendant allows for up to 39 different outgoing messages. The Old Palace School uses this feature to announce any key messages, opening times, telephone numbers for emergencies and a holding message if the caller has to hold.

David Poole at the Old Palace School says, "Since the system has been installed we have found the mobile communications with our key staff to be invaluable. The systems features are easy to use and have provided a smoother and more professional service to the parents. In addition, the system is very versatile and can be adapted quickly and easily to our changing requirements. With the AIMS system management software installed Ascom are able to dial into the system and make programme changes, and if there was a problem this too can also be diagnosed and rectified immediately. We have experienced an excellent service from Ascom and I feel confident that this will continue."

Roy Goodall, major account manager at Ascom Communication Systems Division says, "It was clear that the Ascotel system would be one of the few available to offer the Old Palace School everything it required. The Ascotel system is at the cutting edge of ISDN technology offering improved and efficient communications throughout the school. As the school expands the Ascotel system will also be able to grow to meet its needs."

A summary of the benefits

- Important staff are equipped with Ascotel Office 130 DECT cordless handsets, which are fully integrated within the system, so each member of staff can be contacted easily and make and receive calls, wherever they are on the site, especially important in case of emergencies.
- Direct Dialling, Group Hunting and Voicemail ensures callers, particularly parents are able to get through to the extension or department they need and always have the choice of either leaving a message or speaking to someone.
- The integrated intercom has improved the school's security by allowing staff to identify the visitor before unlocking the door.
- ISDN capability has reduced overall line rental costs and also ensures fast internet access, vital for the smooth running of lessons.
- The Auto Attendant out of school hours provides the caller with a contact number in case of an emergency. During school hours, the Auto Attendant provides useful information to callers who have to hold, an effective way of communicating news and helps prevent callers from hanging up.
- An adaptable and easy to use telephone system ensures the Old Palace School can update the system as its requirements change.