

Adopt a school to inspire young people about construction



Devon & Cornwall Police



Willmott Dixon have 'buddied up' with St James School, Exeter, as part of the Construction Excellence South West 'Adopt a School' initiative engaging with 86 of their students whilst building Exeter's new Police Station at Middlemoor.

The Challenge

The construction industry is growing at an impressive rate with some 220,000 construction jobs being created in the UK over the next five years and the only thing preventing it from accelerating that growth is a lack of people with the right skills. In particular there is a lack of young people entering the industry which is put down to the poor image of the sector. Many construction companies are therefore facing skills and recruitment challenges.

Meaningful engagement with employers plays an important role in enabling young people to make informed decisions about their future careers. Research shows that a young person who has four or more encounters with an employer is 86% less likely to be unemployed or not in education or training.

The Response

With over 150 different job roles, construction is a sector which suits people from a multitude of backgrounds boasting a wide range of different skills, whilst offering lots of well-paid long term career prospects.

While on site at Middlemoor, Willmott Dixon 'adopted' St James School creating an ongoing partnership between the Exeter school and the construction company.

The aim was to inspire the next generation by providing access to real life experiences within the industry while helping the school to achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks.



The Results

To launch the adoption of the school, a group of 14 Year 9 students together with their teachers were invited to visit the Middlemoor site to learn more about the project as well as the different roles involved in a £24 million construction project.

Both the students and teachers very much enjoyed the experience and came away with the best of impressions.

Willmott Dixon facilitated work experience placements for two Year 10 students from St James, both on the Middlemoor site and in the office, and have since arranged a placement for a third student.

The site team also welcomed a Year 10 student on site for a morning, who was showing a keen interest in a career in construction and wanted to find out more about the project and the role of Design Manager.

Furthermore, Willmott Dixon have supported numerous careers and employability events and activities at the school.

Transferable Solution

Future site visits, work placements and career events are planned to help encourage more St James students to choose construction as a career.

"I want to say a huge thank you for today. What a fantastic visit we had and the students were so impressed."

Kelly Avery

Post-16 Transition / Student Mentor, St James School, Exeter