

### Girls can make it in Engineering 2006/2007

Girls make up the most under-represented group in terms of young people choosing this area as a career option. Their perceptions of what a career in engineering might be like are often very far removed from the reality of what is modern engineering entails.

This particular activity is about inspiring young people in the area of Science, Engineering and Technology, by providing them with a fun and practical experience which will give them an insight into the hi-tech skills required to be an engineer in the new millennium.



52 Year 9 female pupils from local schools joined together to compete in a Robotics challenge event organised by the Wessex Setpoint and funded by the Aimhigher LIFE Partnership. The event was hosted by Yeovil College which has invested in modern laboratories and extensive Science facilities during the past few years.

This challenge was specifically aimed at addressing the gender imbalance and potential skills shortage in Science, Technology and Engineering areas.



#### The Project

Pupils were tasked with building robots from especially designed 'Lego' kits and programme them through the use of special software, to perform a variety of tasks around the home, themed around helping 'people with disabilities'. This particular area of engineering – mechatronics, robotics and control engineering provides an ideal career opportunity for bright young engineers of either gender

#### Outcomes

This full-day activity was a huge success, all 52 pupils stated that they had enjoyed the day, 42 of them 'very much'. 54% of pupils felt the activity had 'possibly' raised their interest in engineering, with another 24% stating it 'definitely' had. After the event 39 of the 52 participants thought it was at least a possibility that they may consider an engineering related subject. Of the 22 pupils who were either 'not sure' or did not want to go to university prior to the event, 66% stated that they would now like to go to university following the event.

#### Schools involved

Buckler's Mead (Yeovil), Preston School (Yeovil), Beaminster School (Dorset), Huish Episcopi School (Langport)

## The Girls into Engineering Robotics Challenge 2008

Yeovil College has hosted the Girls can make it in Engineering Robotics Challenge. This event funded by Aimhigher and facilitated by the Wessex Setpoint, who are based in Bath University, was the second that the College has hosted this year. Forty-eight Year 9 girls from five schools attended from King Arthur's School, Beaminster School, Bucker's Mead School, Yeovil; Huish Episcopi School, and Wadham School.



This event endeavoured to change perceptions of what a career in engineering/technology might be like in the new millennium. It also sought to encourage young people to consider studying these fields when they leave school leading ultimately to higher education, whilst informing them of career opportunities in engineering/technology. It also offered students a chance to experience 'college life' first hand in the hope that many will choose to stick with maths and physics at school and choose the new Vocational GCSE (VGCSE) in Engineering. Study at University and careers in Robotics, Control Systems and Mechanatronics at University are rapidly expanding areas of engineering.

This taster day introduces girls to these areas in a fun, challenging and exciting way. The day is always very successful and from just 15 girls three years ago from two schools, it has increased to nearly 90 girls from eight schools this year. There are now a number of girls studying on the VGCSE in Engineering at Yeovil College and on the new Young Apprentice scheme. Prizes for the winning team were provided by Aimhigher. All the girls received certificates and the feedback from them was very positive.

