

Schools Engineering Challenge

A County wide initiative supported by businesses who are either members of South Durham, East Durham or Derwentside Engineering Forums. The Challenge is an after school activity, over a 13 week period for 2 hours a week. 16 year 9 students from all participating schools are divided into 4 teams of 4.

In 2009~2010 each team was tasked with tackling a common transport problem for the Olympic Village 2012 project. Each school is supported during the activity from Engineers with the Forum and also an Industrial Mentor from a Member Company.

Each team had to design, manufacture and functionally test a fully automated vehicle transporter bridge and electric vehicle. The students all come together in a grand final where their work is rigorously inspected and tested against standards expected in the workplace.

The involvement of Industrial Mentors such as David Spensley of Aycliffe Fabrications is key to the success of the programme. By involving 'real' businesses the students gain an invaluable insight into what is expected of them in the workplace plus it gives them an invaluable opportunity to discuss careers in Engineering and Manufacturing. This link enables the students to make better informed decisions when selecting their options as they move into year 10.

Dave Spensley, from Aycliffe Fabrications commented:

"To see the students grow in confidence and ability as the challenge progresses is really fantastic to see and they learn some key skills with regards to teamwork, effective communication and quality. I have been involved with the challenge since its inception in 2007 and although it is a real commitment every week the long term benefit cannot be ignored as it is a commitment to the kids who are the workforce of the future. I would encourage as many employers as possible to join the Engineering Forum and to get involved with the Challenge."

