

Willmott Dixon leading the way with unique Leicestershire student enrichment programme

3 years ago



National contractor [Willmott Dixon](#) has delivered a one-of-a-kind enrichment programme for almost 600 students at Redmoor Academy in Hinckley to not only meet the Leicestershire school's career requirements but also showcase the construction sector and its wide-ranging opportunities.

Delivered across three days, the free programme was created by Marie Wilkes, head of social value at Willmott Dixon and enterprise adviser to multiple Midlands schools, to form part of a robust careers strategy.

The programme also helped to satisfy the Baker Clause requirements, which were updated this year as an amendment to the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 to include Provider Access Legislation and stipulates that schools must inform years eight to 13 of the technical education and apprenticeship options available.

Marie said: "The team really pulled together to deliver this programme - with five members of our business, from quantity surveyors to environmental and sustainability managers, attending each day to give students a real insight into the construction industry.

"It was the first time we've provided anything on this scale, as we usually interact with groups of just 30 students. It was therefore fantastic to see pupils really getting into the sessions, engaging with the tasks and asking insightful questions around sustainability."

The session gave an overview of the construction industry as well as introductions to the Willmott Dixon

team and their career pathways. Following a Q&A session, the students were split into groups of four and created 60 mini-construction companies, where they were tasked with different roles to plan, cost, and build a green village.

By working together as a team and practising the skills they had learnt, each student received an Industrial Cadets accreditation – the equivalent of a bronze Duke of Edinburgh certificate – due to the industry skills gained, such as teamwork, negotiation and presentation.

“The session also tied in nicely with our work at Hollycroft Primary School – just down the road on Normandy Way”

Marie added.

“It’s due to be Leicestershire’s first net-zero carbon in operation school so we wanted to get the students thinking about sustainability. The site team from the project also attended the sessions so it gave a really nice, local approach.

“We want to launch this service wider and pave the way for enrichment programmes to make a tangible difference across the county. Most organisations and training providers don’t have a specialist social value team, so these sessions require a lot of effort. Therefore, our free service should help bridge the skills gap and give back to the community.”

Marisa Westaway, career lead and assistant vice principal at Redmoor Academy, said:

“Working alongside Marie and the Willmott Dixon team has been a fantastic experience – the sessions were organised, methodical and absolutely invaluable for the students.

“It was a real pleasure to see our students inspired, collaborating and enjoying bringing their creative vision to life – which resulted in some excellent and well thought out presentations. It was a truly positive day topped off by the fact that they all received a Bronze Industrial Cadet Award – we look forward to working with Willmott Dixon again in the future.”

Construction is currently underway at the nearby £8.5m net-zero carbon in operation Hollycroft Primary School, which will play a key role in Leicestershire County Council’s plan to become a net-zero carbon county by 2045. Willmott Dixon has been working with the local authority on its schools’ programme for more than 20 years, setting the benchmark for sustainability and providing a high-quality template for future developments.

For more information about sustainability and social value at Willmott Dixon, please visit <https://www.willmottdixon.co.uk/sustainability>.