

GIRL POWER REIGNS AS RECORD NUMBERS SIGN UP FOR APPRENTICESHIPS



Caption (right to left): Amy Harris, 18, of Kidsgrove; Georgia Thorley, 18, of Cheadle, Marisa Barker, 19, of Weston Coyney, Stoke-on-Trent; Maria Bloor, 19, of Swynnerton, near Stone; Danielle Cooper, 19, of Church Eaton, near Stafford; Katie Vodicka, 19, of Solihull, Daisy Coombes, 18, of Macclesfield, Elizabeth Feeley, 18, of Norton Canes, Cannock; Abigail Hodgson, 18, of Rugeley.

A record number of young women have started work at JCB as apprentices – challenging the myth that engineering is very much a man’s world. Nine females have just completed the first week of their apprenticeships – almost double last year’s intake.

They have been recruited as part of the company’s Young Talent initiative which attracted more than 1,000 applications for more than 100 new jobs for apprentices, graduates and undergraduates. A total of 59 of the new positions are for apprentices.

Since its introduction three years ago, JCB’s Young Talent programme has seen almost 350 young people join the business. The latest recruitment drive comes after Lord Bamford underlined his commitment to “identifying and nurturing young talent” in his maiden speech in the House of Lords.

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the launch of JCB’s first ever apprenticeship programme - when every single recruit was a boy.

Group HR Director Alan Thomson said today: “We are delighted that more and more young women seem to be recognising that engineering and engineering companies represent an exciting opportunity for a rewarding and exciting career.

“When JCB’s Young Talent programme first started in 2012, there was a solitary female amongst the apprentice intake. To have nine female apprentices this year is fantastic and we are hopeful it could mean that the tide is finally beginning to turn and that women don’t view engineering as very much a man’s world.

“We have been very busy attending Women in Engineering events and visiting schools to encourage young women to get involved and the hard work is paying off. We need people who can be innovative and creative, who can think for themselves and come up with the right solutions to problems whether they are male or female. We are delighted that more and more young women are choosing to apply for apprenticeships at JCB.”

John Myers, Head of Employer and Delivery Services for the Skills Funding Agency, said: “We welcome the great news from JCB that new apprentices are being recruited. The programme is truly world-class, and as well as benefitting the apprentices, it will underpin the growth in the local and national economy.”

Amy Harris, aged 18, of Kidsgrove, is a Higher Apprentice Engineer. She said: “My dad and my uncle are both engineers and I decided I wanted to get out into the world and do something different rather than going to university.

“A lot of girls shy away from things like engineering because they think it’s mainly for lads and they are a bit intimidated by it but that doesn’t worry me at all. I think it’s great that JCB are going out of their way to encourage more females to apply for apprenticeships.”

Georgia Thorley, 18, of Cheadle, has also joined JCB as a Higher Apprentice Engineer and admits that the subject has always fascinated her. She said: “I can be a bit girly when I want to, but I also like getting my hands dirty. I was part of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths scheme at school and I found it really interesting. There are so many different skills involved and there’s always something new to discover and learn about.

“I’m not bothered about being a girl in a male dominated world, I just take it in my stride. All my friends and family have been very supportive of my decision and I would recommend a JCB apprenticeship 100 per cent.”

Abigail Hodgson, of Rugeley, is another new female JCB recruit although her choice was to sign-up as a Higher Apprentice in Business. Abigail, enjoyed business studies at school and decided to apply to JCB after seeing the help and support given to her older brother Ben during his apprenticeship with the company.

She said: “I have just been given my first placement in the Technical Publications department at the JCB World Parts Centre and I’m really excited about it. I’ll spend six months there and then move on to another placement somewhere else within JCB. That’s the great thing about the JCB apprenticeship scheme; there are just so many interesting things to get involved in.”

Higher Apprentice Engineer Beth Feeley never had any doubts about her career choice – she has wanted to be an engineer since she was young. Brought up around her family’s automotive business, Beth secured a place at the JCB Academy where she studied for a Diploma in Engineering and Maths.

“I’ve always been around engines and other machines for as long as I can remember,” said Beth, aged 18, from Cannock. “I’ve never wanted to do anything else and always knew that a JCB apprenticeship was a better option for me than going to university. JCB’s decision to encourage more girls to get involved in engineering is a great idea – it’s not just a man’s world any more.”

Alan Thomson added: “We have ambitious plans to significantly increase the size of JCB’s business in the next five years and we need talented, well-trained people to successfully realise our aspirations. The Young Talent programme is absolutely key to achieving future growth and the young people joining us this year will play a key role in helping the JCB team meet our goals.”

Many of the young apprentices are on general engineering programmes but others have been offered positions in a range of areas within the business. Last year JCB launched an Advanced Apprenticeship in Business – a first in the UK – and this year 15 young people are joining this programme. In addition the company offers Higher Engineering, Advanced Engineering and Craft Apprenticeships.

Graduates cover disciplines including general engineering, manufacturing engineering, powertrain engineering, MIS, electrical and electronic engineering, business and finance, purchasing and technical sales and marketing. Those on the purchasing, sales and marketing programmes also undertake placement at one of JCB’s factories in India, Brazil, Germany or USA.

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For further information contact: Nigel Chell JCB Press Office

Tel: 01889 590312 Fax: 01889593455 E-mail: nigel.chell@jcb.com www.jcb.com