

FOOD AND DRINK MANUFACTURING CASE STUDY

Coca-Cola helps boost the manufacturing image

In the not-too-distant future, business and education will be inexorably linked. The Diploma in Manufacturing and Product Design will be delivered by consortia of schools, colleges and employers. It will be down to the employers to bring the diploma learning to life, through work placements, giving talks and site tours, and helping to design classroom-based projects.

Coca-Cola Enterprises is already ahead of the game. The company has developed and funded three education centres at its plants in Wakefield, East Kilbride and Edmonton.

The Wakefield education centre opened in 2001. It hosts site visits to the Wakefield bottling plant for school pupils aged 12 and upwards. The visits are designed to tie in with the school curriculum, helping to bring pupils' studies to life. The centre hosts pupils from Year 8 (12 and 13-year-olds) upwards, with the majority being older students who are taking business studies, manufacturing, or food technology GCSEs. It has the capacity to offer two tours a day to 25 secondary-school pupils. Last year, 4,500 students from across the north of England gained an insight into the operations at the plant.

During the two-hour session, pupils study the process of bottling, from making the plastic bottles to loading the finished product onto lorries, and learn about recycling materials and waste reduction. The tour is extensive - with 600 employees working on 10 production lines, and 44,000m² of warehousing and distribution facilities, there is plenty to see.

Samantha Hipkins, manager of the Wakefield Education Centre, explained the importance of engaging with schools: “Having young people see a major manufacturing plant first-hand really helps change their perceptions of the industry. Wakefield is the largest soft drinks plant in the world, and students who visit are always amazed by the high-tech equipment and excellent working conditions in the factory. A lot of them come with a pre-conceived view of manufacturing, but leave full of enthusiasm for the sector.”

She continued: “The visits are curriculum-focused, and we provide pupils with the opportunity to associate what they learn in class with real-life manufacturing techniques. I believe that the centre makes young people more work-aware, and helps to develop skills that will be hugely important when they leave education and enter the world of work.”

For more information, visit the website for the Diploma in Manufacturing and Product Design, at <http://www.manufacturingdiploma.co.uk/>.

