

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

Leah Groves joined the apprenticeship programme at SP Systems in August 2004. She currently spends time at the Isle of Wight College, within the Composites and Engineering Department, during this her Foundation Year of the Apprenticeship Programme.

Working at SP Systems is exciting. The facility at Newport on the Isle of Wight is the Headquarters, which was built in 1999 on an 8 acre site and houses much of our manufacturing, research & development work and operational activities to support and supply the composites industry. It also has the benefit of a 24 hour staff gymnasium and cafeteria with a selection of home-baked food.

Working Toward my Qualifications which includes my second year studying for the BTEC Higher National Diploma, means most of my time is spent at the college, but in August I will be working full time at the company. I must have impressed the company during my interview to become an apprentice, as they allowed me to continue with the Diploma course rather than switching to the Higher National Certificate, which is the normal route for an apprentice at SP. Last year I was awarded by the college "Mechanical Engineering Student of the Year 2003/4", a bit of a surprise but I did work hard for it.

But I also undertake a lot of non-academic training that is specifically relevant to my future job. This includes "Best Practice" manufacturing skills, mechanical handling and computer skills. I recently finished my pallet truck and health and safety training, which is particularly important at the company. I have also been studying Lean Manufacturing Techniques, ways in which to improve the efficiency of the operation.

At work I have put some of this training into practice and developed a report about a work procedure on a specific machine. This impressed my company mentor and the management team as they have now implemented my suggestion which saved the company money for only a small investment. It also made the working environment easier for my work colleagues.

Outside Work I have even been able to apply the skills learned at SP and the College by making presents for family and friends using composite materials.

I have ambition that started before I joined SP Systems. I knew what I wanted to do, so I used my initiative to acquire work experience during my school holidays with another local composites company. I think it is important to show future employers that you have initiative and the ability to work hard – it seems to have paid off for me so far. I really do look forward to the future.

