

Autism and an insight to IBM

by Emma Grove, UK Lab Communications

Breaking down barriers



For teenagers with Autism, the world of employment can seem like an unobtainable dream. With only [16% of adults](#) with autism in full-time employment, the reality is that there are significant barriers to employment.

Four volunteers from IBM set out to break down some of those barriers by inviting students from a local specialist college on site recently.

With a strong interest in technology, the students arrived excited but apprehensive about their visit to the Hursley Lab Campus. Our goal was for them to feel valued and welcome on site, and to let them ask any questions they wished to about routes into IBM, and the type of roles on offer.

Valuing diversity

Emerging Technology gave the visitors an exciting demo of face-aging technology, and the chance to have a go at a VR headset. Gaming was clearly a strong interest for all the teenagers, and they were fascinated by how gaming technology might be used in industry settings.



Chip design in Storage was next on the agenda, and the students had a short talk and tour around C Block's Test Floor. One of the students had a very strong interest in RAID systems, and was delighted to interrogate Storage expert Kelvin Wong.

By now, the students were saying, "I want to work for IBM", and it was time for them to meet with a representative from HR. Francesca Beckett gave an overview of routes into IBM, plus an insight into the application and assessment process.

The teenagers were reassured to hear that IBM values diversity amongst its employees. We were able to explore the invention process, and how looking at problems and solutions from different perspectives is essential.

Increasing confidence

All the students said that, after the visit, they felt more confident they could do work experience at IBM; that they know more about IBM and they understand the application process better. One said he wanted to be a Master Inventor, and another said "I had a fun time".

Thank you to volunteers [@Kevin McEwen](#) and [@Heather Pollard](#), who are also registered [Autism Ambassadors](#), and to [@Daniel Cunnington](#), [@Kelvin Wong](#) and [@Francesca Beckett](#) who made the students feel welcome and valued.