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Jonas Nieveras, Aidan McWhinney, Kelly Keenan St Patrick's College, Barry Neilson CITB NI and Eugene Clarke.

St. Patrick's College link up with Clarke's Fabrications

The Construction Industry Training Board NI (CITB NI) has been working with NI construction employers on its 'Adopt a School' scheme.

And as part of that programme a site visit took place at Clarke's Fabrications Site in Broughshane where St Patrick's College, Ballymena Year 13 students were given a factory tour.

They also heard firsthand about the opportunities in construction and what it is like to be working in one of the biggest sectors in Northern Ireland.

The scheme is aimed at encouraging more young people to think about a career in construction.

The scheme will not only establish local partnerships between education and the industry but also help inspire the next generation to get involved in construction.

Over 60 post primary schools across Northern Ireland have signed up to the scheme, however CITB NI is seeking more construction employers to get involved.

'Adopt a School' provides opportunities for construction companies to build relations with post primary schools, in their local area of work, by providing direct support for schools with construction industry careers activities ranging from careers talks, events, work experience opportunities and site visits.

A recent report forecasts that over 5,000 additional construction workers will be needed by 2026 in Northern Ireland to meet growing demand in the industry.

Although the NI construction industry is experiencing good levels of growth, there are major issues facing the industry including an ageing workforce and declining numbers of new talent. 'Adopt a School' is an opportunity to improve young people's knowledge of the sector, show the many diverse pathways into the industry, as well as dispel misconceptions such as a career in construction is limited to bricklayers, plumbers and architects or that it's only a job for boys.

Attending the 'Adopt a School' event at Clarke Barry Neilson, Chief Executive CITB NI, said: "We are delighted to continue with our 'Adopt a School' scheme and delighted to attend the Clarke site visit with St Patrick's College Ballymena.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for construction employers to engage with and encourage the next generation of young people to consider a career in construction.

"It is also a fantastic opportunity for schools to benefit from a whole range of career activities as well as having a direct contact with those working within the industry.

"We hope the initiative will create more partnerships which will help to recruit, retain and develop the talent required to sustain the industry in the years ahead."

Celine Watson, Head of Talent and Culture at Clarke, commented: "Clarke are delighted to be part of the 'Adopt a School' scheme, encouraging the next generation of young people to consider a career in construction. The Clarke Growth Academy offers apprenticeships, placements and graduate opportunities for young people who want to find their unique place in our business be it on site, in a technical role or in fabrication.

"We are thrilled to partner with St Patrick's College and raise awareness of the diverse roles in the industry."

Kelly Keenan from St Patrick's College Ballymena said: "A very worthwhile and informative morning spent at Clarke, Ballymena.

"Our year 13s were given a tour of the site and saw first-hand the integrate detail and hard work involved in creating their current and impressive Paper Exchange project.

"We are looking forward to seeing this feat of design and engineering in Belfast come to life. Thank you to Clarke for adopting St. Patrick's College, and for the careers advice you have given to our students throughout the year.

"They are fully informed of the routes and opportunities available to them through Clarke."