

Paston engineer Ian Corke worked with students at the Thomas Deacon Academy in Peterborough to win a technology competition involving teams from schools throughout the east of England.

Go4SET (Go for Science, Engineering and Technology) aims to encourage 12 to 14 year olds to look at courses in these areas. Ian explains “Each team had three months to complete a project which involved investigating the use of energy at school, and suggesting ways of reducing its use”.

The Thomas Deacon team – six pupils, two teachers and Ian as technical advisor – listed all the ways they could save energy or generate energy on the site. From the list they focused on three of the ideas. They made a solar panel to pre-heat hot water for taps; made a model showing how the colours of classroom walls affected the number of lights used and therefore the amount of energy consumed; and finally wrote a software programme to reduce energy by turning off computers when people log off.

Ian says, “The solar panel generated the greatest interest. There was a real buzz when it worked – much to the amazement of the youngsters, the water did actually get warm.”

The work was judged in terms of quality of reports and presentations, and technical understanding shown in the project. Thomas Deacon Academy won the judges prize – there was also a students’ prize.

Ian has been working with local schools for a number of years on similar projects. The Thomas Deacon Academy is the largest of those created by the government’s academy programme. It specializes in Math’s and Science and has 2,200 students aged between 11 and 18.