

NEWSLETTER

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*"Why would a woman not be able to do this?"*



the technology classroom at Vakcollege Helmond



*Not just they enjoy it, but also they are good at it*

When you walk through the technology classroom at Vakcollege Helmond, you see wood shavings on the floor and a freshly built wall. The students are focused on their work. Among them are Nicola Bobrzak (16) and Angelina Mastbroek (15) — two girls who deliberately chose a technical path. Not just because they enjoy it, but also because they are good at it and want to show that technology is definitely not just for boys.

"I want to become an architect," says Nicola. "My father owns a construction company and once asked me to make a sketch for a client. When my design was approved by that client, I knew: this is what I want to do more often." Angelina also inherited her love of technology at home. Together with her father, she builds birdhouses, which she even sells. "I do not yet know what profession I will choose, but I do know that I like working with my hands and creating things."

**In the minority**

In their class, the girls are clearly in the minority. Of the thirty students in the third year, only seven are girls. "Sometimes people say things like: 'Wouldn't care work suit you better?' But I do not let that bother me," says Nicola.



*Female teachers as role models*

Technology teachers Aukje van Gijssel and Anouk van der Aa recognize that attitude. They have both worked in the field for years but also know what it feels like to stand out in a male-dominated world. "We are still often addressed as 'sir' in class, just out of habit," Aukje says with a laugh. "But that is exactly why it is so important that we are visible as female role models."

Anouk recalls how that worked for her at school: "When I had a female technology teacher, I finally dared to choose technology. It also helped that I had a friend who chose the same direction."



*Not just strength, but also precision*

According to the teachers, girls bring different qualities to the workshop than boys do. "They work more precisely, are more patient, and pay more attention to finishing details," says Aukje. Anouk adds, "After just one lesson, Nicola could bricklay better than some fourth-year students. And she is incredibly creative. It is great that these girls show that technology is not only about strength."

What they are doing at Vakcollege Helmond aligns perfectly with the European program STEAM Coach, which aims to encourage more girls to choose technology. Not through standard career information, but by using coaching to build self-confidence. The program also highlights female role models. "That is exactly what we are already doing here in Helmond — we just did not know about the program," says Aukje. Still, they are (perhaps unconsciously) already part of it. "I do not treat girls differently from boys," says Aukje.

*"The qualities that women bring actually strengthen the technology sector — and that is something I am proud to stand up for."*