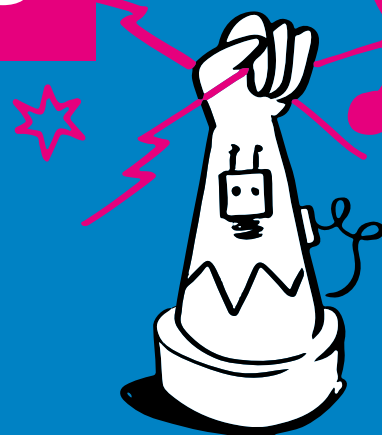




# The young innovators reaching for the stars through robotics

For the Manchester-based team, InCTRL, *FIRST* Tech Challenge UK is their version of the space race. They're fighting to represent Manchester, and more broadly, the North West, in proving that the city's future in STEM is worth paying attention to.



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**InCTRL**

**11 team  
members,  
aged 13-16**

**Co-op Academy  
North Manchester**

## Taking pride in the North West

These young people see Manchester as a city of potential.

While the city has mastered the music and football scene, the team want to bring up-to-scratch young people's access to STEM opportunities up North. Although Manchester is the second-largest tech hub in the UK after London, the significant economic challenges that young people and schools face mean there are limited funded opportunities.

“The team has got a lot out of the challenge and they want other young people to have the experiences they've had. They're very aware that while they're the next generation, they also need to get the next, next generation passionate and interested so that they can move up to what they want to do.”

**Adam Slattery,**

Teacher and Team Lead at Co-op Academy North Manchester

To promote STEM, the team has hosted robotics workshops with local primary schools, plans to clean a local canal, and has made it their mission to get *FIRST* Tech Challenge UK into more Co-op academies.



“There's going to be a lot more Northern competition if we have anything to say about it.”

**Team InCTRL**

# An unwavering commitment to engineering excellence

Despite their lack of previous robotics experience, the team has taken the challenges in their stride and created innovative solutions where most would buckle in frustration.

Their early beginnings are fond memories of spending multiple weeks figuring out what is now second nature to them. They didn't complain when they discovered the first iteration of their robot was too big. Requiring an entire rebuild, this would have felt like one step forward and three steps back, but for InCTRL it was another chance to learn. In fact, they chose to redesign part of their robot again ahead of the UK Championship so they could bring their A-game.

To team members of InCTRL, what they're doing is much More

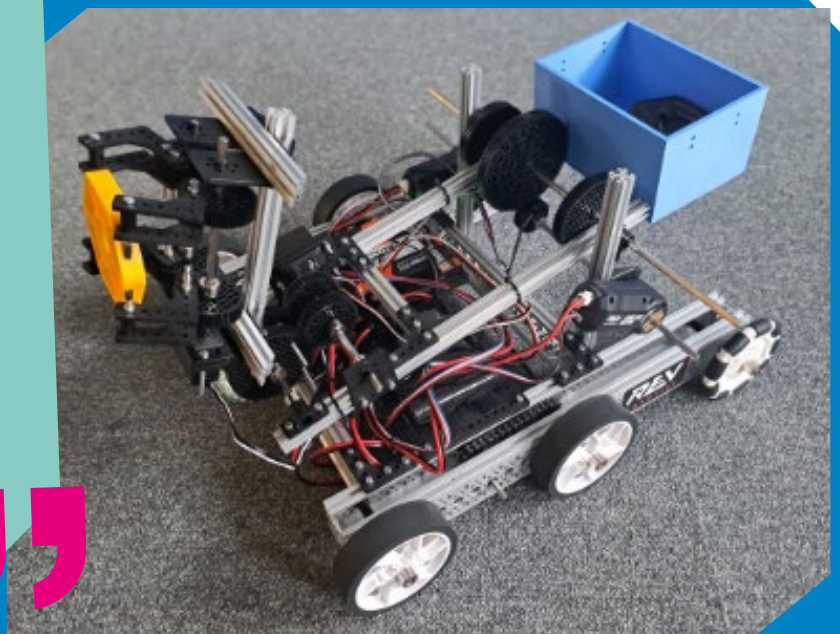
Than Robots. While they learn to troubleshoot and problem-solve on the spot, they're also inspired to go beyond the challenge.

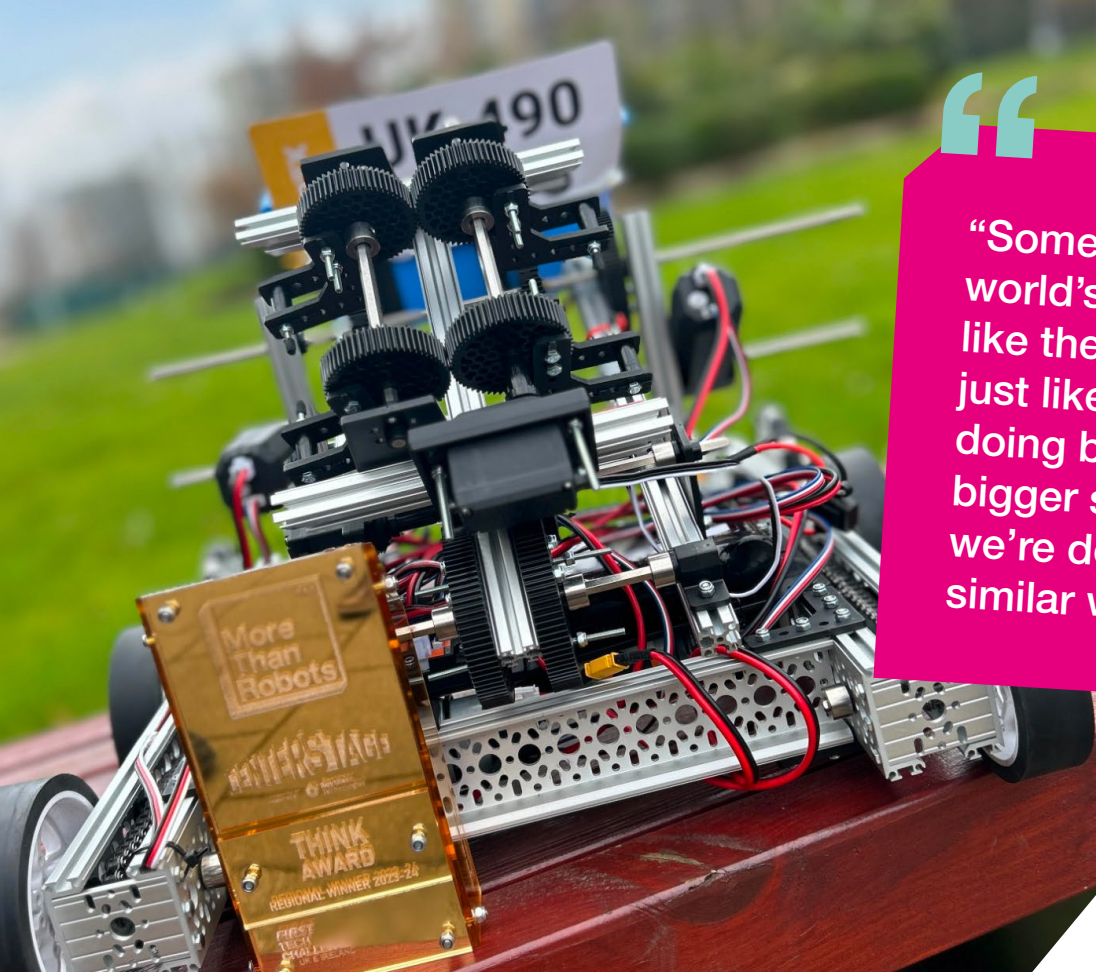
Currently in their second year of competing, the team is challenging itself even further. Michael, the team's project manager, has stepped in to mentor his school's second team who are new to the challenge. Michalina, Lead Programmer, is also looking to advance her coding skills and wants to include vision sensors on this season's robot – basically giving it eyes.

Michael shared that reaching the UK Champs in their first season was less about actually going to the event than the journey to achieving the right to attend, especially when going head-to-head with more experienced teams.

“For me, it's about overcoming obstacles and being inspired – having determination and perseverance for everything. But that's not the most important part, it's learning that the successes are just as important as the failures. I think that really encapsulates our team spirit.”

Michalina (she/her), Lead Programmer,  
InCTRL team member





“Some of the STEM world’s biggest projects like the space race are just like what we’re doing but on a much bigger scale. I think we’re doing something similar with our robot.”

**Taylor (he/him)**, Assistant Engineer, InCTRL team member

## Inspired by the challenge, aiming for the stars

Comparing a classroom-built robot to launching into space might seem like a stretch, but in reality, their robot is the beginning of an exciting journey of unexplored STEM innovations that could shape our future. For these young innovators, going to space isn’t even the limit.

In their words, they’re “cultivating the resilience needed to overcome challenges not just in robotics, but everyday life as well.” Embracing their team motto, “Through Hardships to the Stars” in everything they do, they take pride in overcoming the challenges they face on the way to success, jumping at any opportunity to work closely with other STEM-minded individuals.

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