

Information about Varndean College

Varndean College is a popular and successful Sixth Form College based in Brighton with over 1300 full-time students aged 16 to 19. In the evenings it opens its doors to the community to offer a wide range of adult education courses. It also provides Family and Community Learning at several outreach centres within the City. Full or part-time Access courses have places for up to 60 mature students.

The College draws largely from the Brighton and Hove schools but also from other East and West Sussex schools. A small number of students come from the independent sector and a significant number from overseas. This all makes for a lively and cosmopolitan mix of students.

Varndean's mission is 'through the quality of its provision and support for a diverse community, to encourage and inspire all its students to fulfil their potential'.

Curriculum and Achievement

Varndean College specialises in the provision of academic and general vocational education to the 16-19 age group. At level 3 It offers over 40 A level subjects alongside a choice of vocational qualifications. Varndean is an International Baccalaureate World School with an increasingly popular IB Diploma Programme. The College has begun the implementation of the new 14-19 Diploma in the area of Creative and Media. At level 2 about 150 students follow nine various vocational pathways with the opportunity to study GCSEs in National Curriculum foundation subjects. Additional options for students include a range of sports development courses, modern foreign languages or creative arts courses. The College has developed a successful outreach level 1 programme in the east of the City with four distinctive pathways catering for up to 60 students.

In addition to examination courses and tutorial work, a broad programme of enrichment activities is available to students, including sporting activities, art, drama, music, political and environmental issues, work experience and community service. There is an extensive range of day, residential and international trips and good support for students to organise their own clubs and societies. A thriving student community enables students to contribute to the development and improvement of the College as well as the organisation of social and fund-raising activities. The work of the College in the areas of environmental and international education has been recognised through national awards.

The College has a distinguished record of achievement over a number of years. In 2009 the A level pass rate was 97.1% with more than half of our students obtaining A and B grades and over three-quarters achieving A-C grades. At AS level, students achieved a pass rate of 87%. The success rate of students studying BTEC vocational courses was particularly notable – 100% pass rate and 71% awarded a Distinction. GNVQ results both at intermediate and advanced are outstanding. Varndean College is in the top 3% of Sixth Form Colleges in the country due to its proven history of developing the potential of its students far beyond that predicted at GCSE stage.

Ofsted Inspection

An Ofsted inspection in November 2007 identified a range of key strengths including the:

- Good teaching and learning
- Particularly high standards of students' work
- Very good added value at A Level – the measure that shows by how much a student has progressed since GCSE
- Extensive enrichment opportunities including sport, societies, music and drama.
- Good guidance and support for students
- Outstanding educational and social inclusion through the range of courses

- Very effective partnerships with schools, colleges and other local organizations.
- Effective leadership and management across the College with a clear and shared sense of direction and focus by staff and governors.

Staff

The College staff numbered 233 in April 2011, consisting of 127 full and part-time teachers and 106 full and part-time support staff, plus an additional 50 Adult Education tutors. The Principal, Dr Phil Harland is supported by a Senior Leadership Team of four Directors.

Curriculum subjects are organised into five departments each led by a Head of School. Programme Co-ordinators are responsible for individual subject areas within the departments. Teaching staff are supported by departmental technicians, IT technicians and curriculum administrative staff. The Additional Support Team provides in-class support and individual support to students. Support staff teams include HR, Finance, Marketing, Registry and Site Maintenance.

There are extensive opportunities for professional development and effective processes for induction of new staff. The College holds Investors in People status.

Support and Guidance

In supporting students to achieve their potential there is a specialist team of Personal Tutors who provide regular one to one meetings to monitor progress. Provision of additional learning support is extensive and there is a confidential counselling service. Students have comprehensive guidance and support on careers and higher education.

Varndean works in close partnership with parents. Parents receive regular reports on student progress, attend a series of parent's evening and are contacted whenever necessary. The college is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.

Accommodation and Facilities

The College's attractive building is situated on an impressive site at the head of a large green campus just 10 minute's drive from Brighton city centre. There are views to the south over the city and to the sea.

The College's facilities include:

- Learning Resource Centre (LRC) – with over 15,000 resources including books, CDs and DVDs
- Open Access IT facilities – 6 computers in the LRC and 2 open access IT rooms with 35 computers
- 9 dedicated computer rooms and access to IT from most teaching rooms
- On-site canteen serving range of hot meals, salads and snacks
- Free on-site parking
- Extensive playing fields for organised sports

Prospective candidates are encouraged to visit our website at www.varndean.ac.uk for more detailed information regarding the College.