



ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT 2025– 2026

OUR MISSION

Varndean Sixth Form College will **transform** the **lives** of our students and our community **through** our provision of **exceptional education**.

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Varndean Sixth Form College is a thriving and successful sixth form college in the heart of the city of Brighton and Hove; it attracts students from within Brighton and Hove as well as drawing students from across East and West Sussex. We are very much a College for our community and offer an inclusive curriculum of Level 3 A Levels, Applied Generals, the International Baccalaureate Diploma and at level 2, GCSEs and vocational courses. The vast majority of our students study at Level 3 with us. Each year approximately 100 students progress from a Level 2 study programme to Level 3 study programme with us. Many students take a mixture of academic and vocational subjects at level 3 (36%) and the college has level 2 provision for circa 150 students per year (9%).

The college is one of only a few state providers of the International Baccalaureate Diploma nationally and the only one in Sussex. We have an international department which attracts students from across Asia and Europe as well as South America. Numbers continue to thrive at 110 students per year. The College also provides and develops the skills of adult learners within Brighton and Hove with a range of Counselling Courses funded by ESFA as well as self funded qualification and skills based courses to circa 300 learners annually.



OUR MISSION

TO
TRANSFORM
THE
LIVES
OF OUR STUDENTS
AND OUR COMMUNITY
THROUGH
OUR PROVISION OF
EXCEPTIONAL
EDUCATION

OUR VALUES

- We inspire **academic excellence**, high expectations and a thirst for knowledge, developing a curiosity and passion for lifelong learning.
- We have a **dynamic culture** which engages staff and students, celebrates achievement, encourages innovation, and strives for continual improvement.
- We enable **true social mobility** for all student groups providing the environment, support and opportunities that every student needs to succeed in order to narrow gaps within society.
- **Equality and diversity** is at the heart of all we do. We promote understanding and respect for different cultures and communities, in college, locally and globally.
- We provide excellent opportunities for **enrichment, well-being and pastoral support** so that we build resilient, happy and successful students who flourish in life.
- **Environmental sustainability** is at our core, we are committed to carbon literacy, becoming carbon neutral and developing our estate as an area of biodiversity.
- We believe in **inspirational governance, leadership and management** and invest in our staff, empowering a confident, diverse and energised workforce.
- We responsibly use public funds and provide **value for money** to safeguard the financial stability of the College to bring maximum benefit to our local community.

OUR STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO

ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY

OUR
CURRICULUM

GLOBAL
CITIZENSHIP

COMMUNITY &
PARTNERSHIPS

OUR STAFF

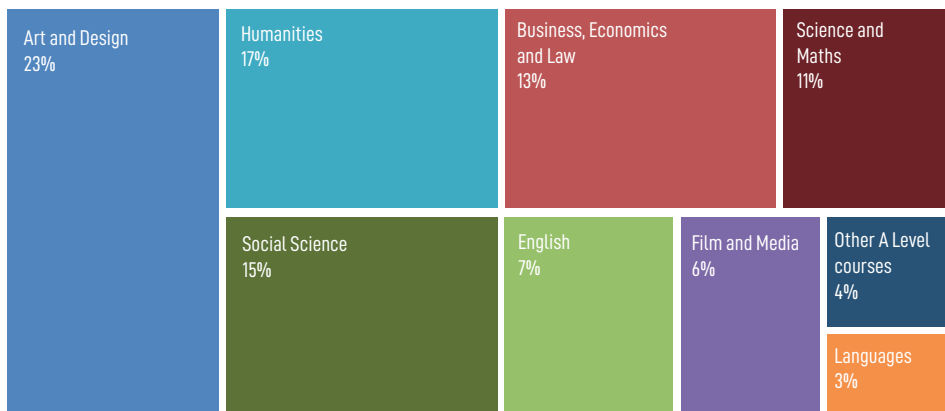
FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

OUR CURRICULUM

We provide an innovative, aspirational and inclusive curriculum which promotes the value of learning, fosters curiosity and knowledge and enables all students to achieve excellence. We deliver provision which enables the ambitions of our students and responds to individual and local needs.

Our provision is closely aligned to local and national needs. Our curriculum balance closely aligns with our local context and we are unusual in the high number of creative provision which matches the local economy.

- Art and Design
- Business, Economics and Law
- English
- Film and Media
- Humanities
- Languages
- Other A level courses
- Science and Maths
- Social Science





CONTEXT AND PLACE

Brighton and Hove is a coastal city in East Sussex, in South East England. The neighbouring towns of Brighton and Hove formed a unitary authority in 1997, and in 2001 were granted city status by Queen Elizabeth II.

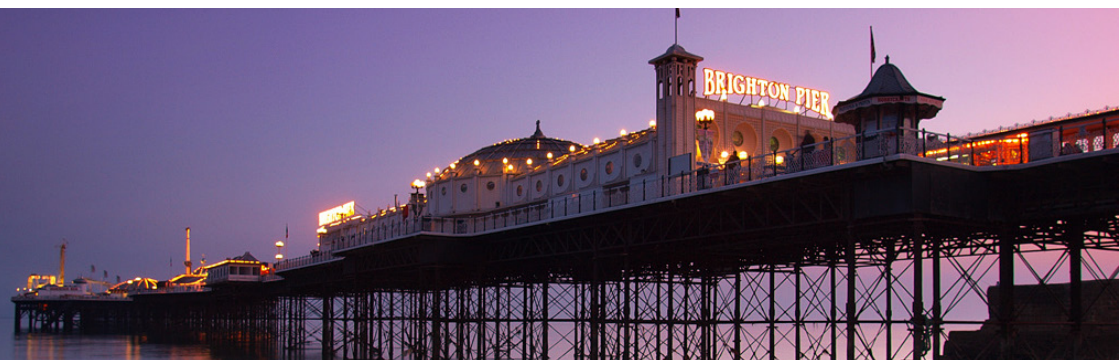
The Future Skills Sussex LSIP focus area runs from Gatwick Airport south to Brighton and Hove – the two areas of Sussex with the greatest concentration of skilled jobs – and along the entire Sussex coastal strip, described as an inverted T. This area presents a unique economic landscape within a compact space, with the more buoyant economies of the area around Gatwick and Brighton and Hove contrasting with less economically/socially advantaged areas found in some of Sussex's coastal towns.

This is a compact, functional economic area, with natural travel to work patterns to Gatwick Airport and Brighton and Hove. The area encompasses Sussex's larger settlements and contains the greatest concentration of employers and providers.

SOCIO-ECONOMICS OF BRIGHTON & HOVE

Despite a vibrant and thriving economy the city scores highly on deprivation indices. Parts of the city score highly on the indices of deprivation are in the most deprived areas in England. The highest concentration of deprivation is in the Whitehawk, Moulsecomb, and Hollingbury areas. These are areas the College attracts a high number of students from.

We work closely with the local education partnership board on enabling social mobility and equal opportunity for all within the City, drawing significantly from within the most deprived areas of the city.





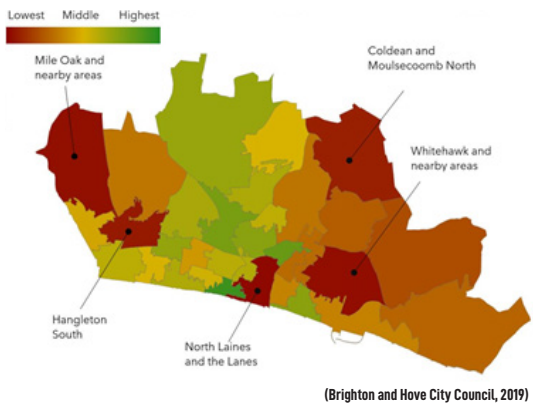
'Students flourish in the vibrant and highly inclusive culture staff create. Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision to provide high-quality and inclusive education for all students, including those who are disadvantaged. With staff, they share a very strong commitment to social mobility and justice and place students firmly at the centre of their work. Managers provide programmes of learning for students to develop the knowledge, behaviours, confidence and resilience they need to be successful. As a result, most students are well prepared for their futures. A high proportion move on to higher education, further learning and employment.'

Ofsted, March 24

As a college we are committed to outstanding progress for all, it is strategically important for us to ensure there is the support that all young people in the City and beyond need to thrive. As such we provide exceptional support with specialist onsite mental health support and therapeutic services, a Social Work Liaison Officer and outstanding additional support. The number of High Needs students studying with us is 48. We are proud of our inclusivity, high aspiration and support for our students.

28% of our 16-18 students are identified as being from an area of significant deprivation by postcode with 50% of students identified as from widening participation backgrounds.

**Geographical variation in the KS4 Attainment 8 of Disadvantaged pupils
(three-year average to 2018/19)**



Student experience and outcomes are consistently outstanding, with ALPS value added at 2 for A Level, the IB rated as World Class and GCSE Maths and English resit results being amongst some of the best in the country. Our progression data is very positive. Our most recent Ofsted in March 2024 acknowledged the high quality of our teaching and learning, our exceptional student experience, and our wonderful supportive atmosphere. Students flourish at Varndean Sixth Form College, we add significant value to our learners.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Across the majority of Sussex Local Authorities, Professional Occupations form the largest single occupational group of job postings. Nurses and Care Workers have been the most-posted occupations for the last three years, based on total annual job postings in Sussex.

The Future Skills Sussex area comprises:

- 73,810 registered businesses (ONS 2024) marginally down from 74,325 (ONS 2023) producing over £51.7bn Gross Value Added in total (ONS 2023)
- 1,040,400 working age population (ONS 2024) marginally down from 1048,829 (ONS 2023)
- Two county councils and one unitary authority – East and West Sussex County Councils and Brighton and Hove City Council
- Seven Further Education (FE) and three Higher Education (HE) Institutions
- A multitude of Independent Training Providers (ITPs), many of which are represented by Sussex Council of Training Providers (SCTP)
- Two Institutes of Technology (IoT) – Sussex and Surrey IoT and South East IoT
- Two Careers Hubs – one covering West Sussex and Brighton & Hove and the other covering East Sussex
- An international transport hub – Gatwick Airport

Gatwick Airport and the **city of Brighton and Hove** are key to economic growth and are the net importers of workers. Gatwick is the UK's second largest airport, a vital piece of the UK's national infrastructure and a major driver for both the regional and national economies. Brighton and Hove is the most populous and most successful coastal city in the UK. It has a strong knowledge economy, an entrepreneurial workforce and high business start-up rates.

Sussex has an **ageing population** and notably a much smaller younger population than other areas of England. With many of the 50+ workforce leaving the labour market post-Covid, this has put significant pressure on labour market supply.

There are significant historic **areas of deprivation** along the coast. **Coastal towns** have lower education and skills attainment levels, a lower proportion of the working age population, and a high proportion of jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

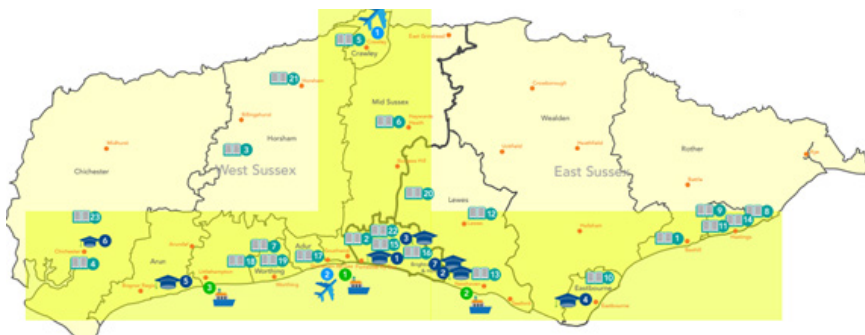
STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Rural areas north of the coast have a particularly large ageing workforce and lower levels of qualifications. There is limited choice of further education providers for young people due to restricted access to public transport.

Sussex is mirroring national trends in terms of a **tight labour market** because of changes to immigration rules, the pandemic and inflationary pressures.

99.72% of businesses in Sussex are micro, small and medium sized enterprises. Latest data available in 2021 showed that business growth had slowed significantly across Sussex, although less so in Brighton and Hove.

The LSIP area identifies an 'inverted T' running across the coast and down from Gatwick airport. Varndean College is positioned squarely in the centre of the LSIP area with 93% of our learners coming from within the City and drawing from within the 'inverted T'.



(Sussex Chamber of Commerce, LSIP, 2022)

According to NOMIS there are 15,920 enterprises based in Brighton and Hove.

The most represented sectors are:

- Retail (3395)
- Professional, scientific and technical (2800)
- Information and Communication (1920)
- Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services (1250)
- Business administration and support services (1190)
- Accommodation and Food (1065)



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

There are currently 140,400 people employed in Brighton & Hove, working in 15,800 businesses. Brighton & Hove accounts for 35% of all employment in the Greater Brighton City Region and 16% of employment in the former Coast to Capital LEP.

Brighton & Hove generates a GVA of £7.1bn per annum, which equates to £65,400 per FTE worker. At a headline level, this is comparatively low compared to sub-regional and national average. The City's productivity gap compared to the City Region is currently around 10%.

The City's four largest employment sectors account for over two thirds of all jobs:

- Public admin, health and education – over **40,000** jobs, accounting for around a third of the economy
- Prof and financial services – around **20,000** jobs
- Visitor economy activities – around **18,000** jobs
- Retail – around **16,000** jobs

The City's business base is spread across a broader range of sectors, reflecting the large number of small businesses which characterise the City. At the headline level, the structure of the Brighton & Hove economy is similar to the national average, with only three stand out specialisms in terms of concentration of activity:

- ICT and Digital – 1.4 times more concentrated locally than nationally, with around 7,000 jobs
- Creative activities – 1.4 times more concentrated locally than nationally; around 4,000 jobs
- Visitor economy activities – around 1.3 times more concentrated locally, with around 18,000 jobs

Growth has been experienced across a broad segment of the City's economy in recent years, and has been particularly strong in higher value ICT, Creative and Professional & Financial activities. Despite this there has been some contraction in manufacturing and the visitor economy.

(Source: Coast to Capital LEP <https://www.c2cbusiness.org.uk/borough/brighton-hove>)



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSSEX

The LSIP updated their findings and added greater specificity around key sectors. Challenges were set under key headings, shaping their priorities. Notably, while challenges stemmed from extensive Sussex research, many reflect national skills and workforce issues. Much of what was reported during the trailblazer remains, with added challenges around labour market supply and sector-specific skills needs.

LABOUR MARKET SUPPLY

Key challenges for the Future Skills Sussex LSIP area

A full overview of the key challenges faced by the FSS LSIP area can be found in the full report. To summarise the findings in the report at the time of writing:

- Sussex has an **ageing population**. It is significantly older than the rest of the southeast and England, apart from Brighton and Hove and Crawley.
- There are significant and historic **areas of deprivation along the coast**, alongside more prosperous coastal towns including Brighton and Worthing.
- **Rural areas north of the coast** have a particularly **large ageing workforce and lower levels of qualifications**.
- **Businesses in smaller towns are competing for skilled labour** with the cities of Brighton & Hove and London, and increasingly Crawley.
- There has been a significant increase in **economic inactivity among the 50+ year-old population** since the pandemic.
- There is a **history of siloed working** amongst providers and across geographies (although this is showing marked improvement since the introduction of the FSS LSIP).

LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Future Skills Sussex Improvement Framework is an employer led collaboration of partners to formulate a Sussex systems leadership approach to develop the skills provision that needs to be expanded, developed and innovated or adapted to better support the employer skills needs and ensure a more responsive local skills system that is able to address the challenges and barriers that have been identified.

An update to the economic context of the Sussex LSIP area can be found in Section 3

Priorities for Change Below are the **Future Skills Sussex** LSIP Priorities for Change (see Figure 2) that we published in August 2023

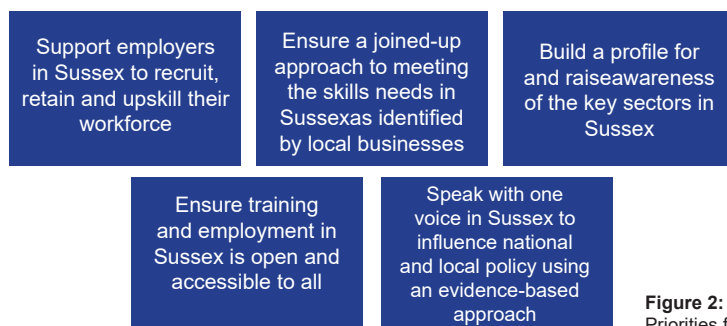


Figure 2: The Sussex LSIP Priorities for Change

Improvement Framework

The Future Skills Sussex Improvement Framework, developed collectively with employers and key partners continues to support our vision to work together under one umbrella to support the people and businesses across Sussex, to speak with one voice and make a lasting impact.

KEY SECTORS

CONSTRUCTION

DIGITAL

ENGINEERING &
MANUFACTURING

LAND-BASED

HEALTH & CARE

VISITOR &
HOSPITALITY

CREATIVE &
CULTURAL

Varndean Sixth Form College uses the LSIP to shape and design its curriculum offer. Our curriculum is shaped and co-designed by employers and industry links.

Our curriculum is particularly effective in meeting the needs of shortage areas in the creative and cultural sector area.

Through our curriculum we are providing a workforce for the future in a world shaped by digitisation and decarbonisation. This is prevalent in the number of leavers who access creative and digital courses (30% of enrolments) and our development of the carbon literacy qualification.

APPROACH TO DEVELOPING THE PLAN

Varndean Sixth Form College is engaged in a number of local FE provider consortia to ensure that all young people in the City have access and choice in their Further Education, and to ensure provision is mapped to the local and national skills agenda.

THE ACCORD CONSORTIA

The two other colleges in Brighton and Hove; Brighton Metropolitan College (a General Further Education college, part of Chichester College Group) and BHASVIC (another Sixth Form College), collectively, form the 'The Accord'. Together, we co-plan our curriculum offer for the city and beyond to ensure that we collectively meet the needs of our local community and 16-18 year olds.

Recently we have co-opted the remaining post 16 provider, a school sixth form into the group. Varndean Sixth Form College's curriculum offer ensures that there is the choice for all 16 year olds including the opportunity to study at Level 2 as well as Level 3.

FE SUSSEX

The County benefits from an established and strong partnership between all the FE providers in Sussex who form the 'FE Sussex' consortium (a company limited by guarantee of all Sussex college members). This group works closely with the Sussex Chambers of Commerce and has been influential in helping to shape the Sussex Local Skills Improvement Plan. This partnership has resulted in a genuine collaboration between the four sixth form colleges and five GFE colleges within Sussex and has developed a plethora of collaborative approaches to addressing the skills needs across Sussex through the firstly the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) and currently the Local Skills Improvement Fund.

The Principal and CEO of Varndean Sixth Form College represents FE Sussex on the LSIP Board. FE Sussex have been a trailblazer in their successful approach to utilising DFE grant funding to meet the skills needs of Sussex.



COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN SO FAR

LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT FUND

FE Sussex were awarded £4.5 million pounds Local Skills Improvement.

Through this delivery learners across all FE Sussex institutions benefitted from:

1. **Sussex job-matching app, and employability/provision platforms**
2. **Sussex Centres for Entrepreneurship & Business Leadership**
3. **VR & AR teaching**

PROJECT 1

Sussex Skills App /
Employability skills and
Provision Platforms

PROJECT 2

Sussex Centres for
Entrepreneurship &
Business Leadership

PROJECT 3

Immersive / Cross
Campus/VR AR Teaching

Varndean College continues to make a significant contribution to the delivery of the LSIF across all strands and specifically addressing the needs of LSIF Priority 3 through project 2.

The CODES Project, which was developed in response to the Trailblazer LSIP, is creating nine Centres of Digital Excellence (CODES) with state-of-the-art technology. These CODES devised, develop and implement 75 employer focused modular courses in digital technology.

Greener Sussex Varndean Sixth Form College continues to trailblaze and enable all students to have access to the carbon literacy qualification.

Project 1 All students are enrolled on the Sussex Skills App following the college successfully co-designing this with learner voice input from Varndean Sixth Form College

Project 3 Varndean Sixth Form College's immersive classroom is now fully implemented and is being used to co-design the curriculum with employers, host employer events and to have a digital workforce for the future.

ACTION PLAN

Contribution to National, Regional, Local Priorities

Below, we set out a number of aims and target outcomes for the year ahead that reflect how we are responding to national, regional and/or local priorities and skills needs.

Aim/Target Outcome for 2025-26 Academic Year	Impact and Contribution to Strategic Aims, Skills Priorities and Priorities for Improvement
<p>Strategic Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen and formalise strategic partnerships with local Higher Education providers and employers to ensure all students benefit from high-quality progression pathways, curriculum co-design, and meaningful engagement activities. - Actively contribute to the development of the Further and Higher Education Sussex Strategic Alliance (FHESSA) to support student life skills, wellbeing, and funding opportunities. Ensure all students have at least two meaningful employer interactions per year. Co-design curriculum elements and skills enrichment activities with HE and employer partners. Continue to grow Varndean College's role within FE Sussex to maximise student benefit from collaborative regional projects and influence future skills policy. <p>In 2025-26, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to delivery of LSIF project outcomes, including immersive classroom use and reaching regional DfE KPIs. Support rollout and training for the Landed app and employer engagement activities. Share good practice through participation in the first FE Sussex Teaching and Learning Conference. Continue to influence regional skills policy with a focus on post-election priorities and curriculum innovation. <p>S7 & EQR Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain strong partnerships with S7 and EQR networks to ensure students benefit from high-quality provision and staff access continuous professional development. Engage in collaborative quality improvement and curriculum innovation. Share best practice through teaching, learning, and leadership. Support leadership development and subject-specific networks. <p>LSIF board, Chambers of Commerce, local authority federation group and ACCORD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the College remains in a strong position in preparation for devolution, demographic changes and educational skills policy through its membership and alliances with local skills and education boards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhances social mobility and supports student progression into higher education, employment, or training. Aligns curriculum with LSIF sector priorities and local labour market needs, ensuring responsiveness to employer demand. Builds resilience, confidence, and transferable skills in students through real-world engagement and experience. Strengthens collaboration across the FE/HE landscape in Sussex in anticipation of future legislative and funding changes. Supports mental health and workload initiatives across institutions through FHESSA collaboration. Ensure Varndean College students benefit from shared resources, digital innovation, and enriched employer links. Enhances staff development and curriculum delivery through regional training and collaboration. Strengthens Varndean's leadership role in shaping future skills provision locally and nationally. Contributes to the achievement of LSIF and LSIF priorities, aligning with national DfE objectives. Drive continuous improvement in teaching and learning Enhance staff expertise and consistency through peer-led CPD. Ensure students benefit from high-quality, innovative provision. Build leadership capacity and support succession planning. Ensure Varndean College students benefit from shared resources, innovation, and enriched employer links. Ensure that staff share good practice across the City to improve City wide educational outcomes, especially from those in disadvantaged groups Ensure that the curriculum and provision for Brighton and Hove is mapped and planned so that all learners have access to post 16 education and skills

ACTION PLAN (CONT'D)

Aim/Target Outcome for 2025-26 Academic Year	Impact and Contribution to Strategic Aims, Skills Priorities and Priorities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and shape a curriculum which enables our students to develop employability skills and enhance life chances • Maintain and update vocational curriculum offer • Develop and embed employability skills for all students through high quality careers and employer interactions including the Vardean Internship Programme, industry weeks, wex weeks and progression events • Involve employers in shaping our curriculum through employer and teaching staff interactions • Further embed our curriculum inline with LSIP and national priorities through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative and digital skills, • T-level in CACHE- grow and sustain this offer • Health and wellbeing through the provision of Vocational adult education provision in counselling • Respond to new technologies such as AI through our partnership and research projects with University of Sussex, S7 and JISC and prepare students to be the workforce of the future through induction and teaching and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students will assess the skills needed to enable equal access to HE and workforce, social justice. • DfE data will demonstrate that the College meets the needs of students (destinations data) • All staff will engage professional development and students will understand the use of AI in college work and lessons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the College is responsive to its cohort, key trends and national picture to ensure that it is meeting the needs of its students in a timely manner as well as mapping our provision to the national skills priorities • Ensure that destination data is accurately recorded annually • Ensure that we are collecting, recording and responding to National Skills Priorities in the Sector Subject Areas 	<p>According to the Fe Provider Dashboard:</p> <p>Ensure that the rates of progression into sustained employment and/ or HE is at expected levels given our context from -3.7 to 0.1</p>

LOCAL NEEDS DUTY

Varndean College makes a strong contribution to local and national skills needs. The College has been particularly successful in very effectively engaging with employers and stakeholders to understand the skills needs of the local, regional and national economy in order to prepare students for future education, employment or work. All students benefit from excellent employer engagement opportunities and undertake work experience.

The College maps its curriculum to local skills needs and co-designs its curriculum with external stakeholders. Students progress into excellent destinations in Higher Education, apprenticeship and employment which are linked to the sector shortage areas.

Further developments planned are:

- Further involve employers in the curriculum design of all courses
- Continue to develop adult courses, expand the provision of skills based curriculum for adult learners

'Leaders and managers work effectively with a broad range of stakeholders to identify and respond positively to local and regional skills needs. They collaborate with Brighton and Sussex Chambers of Commerce, FE Sussex and Brighton and Hove Council to secure funding and invest in resources and initiatives that meet the priorities set out in the local skills improvement plan. For example, leaders have introduced a carbon literacy qualification for all students, so they become more environmentally responsible. Staff work with employers to improve the digital competencies of those seeking employment in the creative and digital media sectors.

Leaders and managers have given careful thought to the design of programmes so that they provide students with the knowledge and skills they need for employment. For example, with a key employer, leaders have designed and established an internship programme so that students develop skills in teamwork, resilience and problem-solving. As a result, students are developing the range of skills employers in the region demand.'

Ofsted, March 24

1. Corporation statement signed off on:
2. This document can be accessed via our website:
3. Related Documents

Strategic Plan: <https://varndean.ac.uk/documents/policies/StrategicPlan2022.pdf>