



**ICELAND  
TRIP**

**MEDVETDENT  
STUDENTS IN  
PERC COMP**

**FOUNDATION LEVEL  
SOCIAL ACTION  
PROGRAMME**



**Varndean**  
Sixth Form College

# UPDATE

**SPRING 2026**

**CULTURE DAY**



# CULTURE WEEK

## A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY

Varndean Sixth Form College's highly anticipated annual Culture Week has taken place for its fourth successful year.

Organised by the Student Union, the week got off to a fantastic start with students taking part in 'Pin the Tail on the World Map'. Students added pins to a world map to indicate where they are from and to demonstrate just how wonderfully diverse Varndean Sixth Form College is.

Later during the week, students had the opportunity to watch the movie 'Hidden Figures', which showed the determination and perseverance

needed to overcome racism and misogynistic attitudes, as well as take part in a 'Language of Love' where they exchanged languages and cultures with each other.

The grand finale took place on Friday, with a spectacular celebration of fashion, food, and entertainment. Students showcased traditional attire from different cultures, bringing a dazzling display of colours and styles to the College. The event also carried an important message of global awareness and social responsibility, as funds were raised in support of the International Rescue Committee.

The event brought together students, staff, and the wider community for an inspiring celebration of diversity, heritage, and global connections.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated, supported, and contributed to making Culture Week 2026 such an unforgettable experience. Here's to many more years of celebrating the richness of our global community!



# SPORTING NEWS!



**It's been an absolute whirlwind in the PE & Sports department! We've hit the ground running this term, and the energy across the fields, courts, and slopes has been nothing short of electric.**

Back in December, our sports students headed to University of Southampton for a deep dive into the future of sport! They didn't just observe, they got hands-on with cutting-edge gear, and joined professional workshops. A fantastic opportunity to experience a day at university with top-tier lecturers and students.

This trip was followed in January by a visit to the University of Brighton for an insight into the world of sport at higher education. From pushing their limits in high tech fitness

testing workshops to experiencing a university lesson in their new strength and conditioning gym. It was a great day of exploring elite facilities and seeing where their passion for sport can take them.

Our new Work Experience (WEX) programme is officially in full swing. We've been hosting guest speakers from across the industry, giving our students a backstage pass to the diverse career pathways in sport. Speakers have included, Toby Bull, a goalkeeper and content creator, and Phil Smith, head of sport at Paralympics GB.

Huge shoutout to our Men's 2nd Football Team. It's been a rip-roaring, goal-scoring season so far. They've been clinical in front of the net and are officially charging toward the

SSFA League semi-finals. Watch this space – the trophy might just be coming home!

We traded the turf for the mountains in early March! Our ski trip to Claviere, Italy, was a massive success. Students enjoyed a week of crisp mountain air, perfect bluebird skies, and some seriously impressive skiing. A huge thank you to everyone who came along and helped make the trip such a brilliant experience. We can't wait for the next one!

The campus is buzzing every afternoon with our jam-packed enrichment sessions. Whether it's the tactical play in Women's Football, the high energy of Basketball and Netball, or the community vibes of Social Football, the turnout has been incredible.



# RECENT TRIPS



## GEOGRAPHY & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE STUDENTS VISIT ICELAND

In November, Geography and Environmental Science A Level students travelled to Iceland. With a packed 4-day itinerary, they visited waterfalls, volcanoes, rift valleys, a glacier, a geothermal power station, as well as iconic locations such as the Black Sand beach and the erupting Geysir. The trip was full of opportunities to learn about the unique landscapes of southwest Iceland that have been shaped by ice and fire, and how these have shaped the area's culture and economy. It was a really memorable trip, with unforgettable highlights, including a glimpse of the Northern Lights and an outdoor swim in a geothermally heated pool. Students showed real enthusiasm, curiosity and a sense of adventure, with many daring to try the local speciality of fermented shark!



## PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS SPEND A DAY AT A PSYCHOTHERAPY CLINIC

Psychology students spent a day at a psychotherapy clinic for a session led by the organisation's Clinical Director and Lead Psychotherapist and four other experienced therapists. There was an introduction to the world of therapy; a practical therapeutic exercise; a discussion exploring how to get in to the profession; and a Q&A session. A careers and skills-focused event which really benefited students interested in a career in counselling/therapy.



## COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS AT THALES

In October, Computer Science students visited Thales in Crawley, a global leader in defence, aerospace, cyber and digital technology. They received an introduction to the company and a tour of their site, met current apprentice software engineers, completed problem-solving exercises, as well as took part in a mock Assessment Day task to experience the application process. It was a brilliant day and Thales made everyone feel very welcome.



## PSYCHOLOGY & SOCIOLOGY STUDENTS VISIT THE BETHLEM ROYAL HOSPITAL

IB Psychology students and A level Sociology students visited The Bethlem Royal Hospital. They attended a talk on how mental illness was treated in the past at the old Bedlam hospital, participated in a workshop analysing patients' art and visited the Bedlam Museum which charts how society and psychiatry have acted towards mental health.



## TEXTILES STUDENTS EXPLORE 'DIRTY LOOKS' AT THE BARBICAN

Our Textiles students had an amazing time at the 'Dirty Looks' exhibition at the Barbican Centre in January. The exhibition explored how dirt and decay have been used to defy beauty standards. As a counterpoint to glossy digital perfection, the artistic practices pointed us to a new way of thinking about a sustainable future for fashion. The exhibition featured incredible work by fashion icons such as Hussein Chalayan, Alexander McQueen, Vivienne Westwood and Maison Margiela.



## BUSINESS STUDENTS LEARN THE THINKING BEHIND THE BRANDS

Year 1 Business A Level students also had a rare behind-the-scenes look into one of London's most exciting branding agencies, ODA Branding. Founding partner, the inspirational Panna Rose, provided valuable insights into the work of a branding agency explaining the thinking behind campaigns for companies ranging from Costa to Travis Perkins to Domino's.

One of the creative leads talked about his role in the business since graduating with a graphic design degree - including a day of sampling all the fried chicken outlets around Leicester Square in order to research the market Domino's is now entering!

Students then headed to Westfield so they could put their new knowledge to the test, analysing contrasting retail brands. Not that they needed much encouragement once they arrived at the huge shopping centre! A tiring but fulfilling day putting theory into practice.



## BUSINESS STUDIES VISIT THE AMEX!

The Business Studies Department took 70 students to the AMEX Stadium in November for a day of inspiring business activities. Students engaged in team building and communication exercises and were challenged to give a business pitch for the new Terrace hospitality area.

There was also a tour of the impressive stadium, including a behind the scenes insight into the away team's experience vs the home team's experience.

## BUSINESS STUDENTS GAIN REAL-WORLD INSIGHT AT MACKENZIE THORPE STUDIO

In January, Business Studies students visited the Mackenzie Thorpe art studio in Hove to learn about the challenges of starting and running a small business. Issues discussed included, managing the uncertainty around tariffs. Students also got to meet the staff and see Mackenzie at work in his studio. The trip highlighted the relevance of studying A Level Business.



A Level and IB Spanish students enjoyed an enriching cultural trip to Madrid in December, where they fully immersed themselves in the language, history, and vibrant culture of Spain. The visit came at a perfect time, just before the festive holidays, allowing them to experience the city's atmosphere while deepening their understanding of Spanish life beyond the classroom. Una experiencia fantástica para todos!

## SPANISH STUDENTS ENJOY CULTURAL TRIP TO MADRID



### EXPLORING JUSTICE THROUGH THEATRE

As part of their A Level Law and BTEC Criminology studies, students attended a theatre trip to see *Prima Facie* at the Richmond Theatre, London. This critically acclaimed play explored the complexities of the criminal justice system, particularly the handling of sexual assault cases, the role of legal ethics, and the balance between prosecution and defence. The performance provided a valuable insight into courtroom processes, the adversarial nature of the legal system, and the lived experiences behind legal principles, helping students to deepen their understanding of key topics studied within both A Level Law and BTEC Criminology.



### BUSINESS STUDIES VISIT UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

Over 45 Year 1 Business Studies students attended a day of talks hosted by Brighton University's Business Department in February. The day started with an insight into behavioural economics and its impact on consumer choice. After campus tours by the university ambassadors, students were then challenged to pitch a business idea to an audience. Amongst the ideas were personalised punch bag sleeves and IT classes for older citizens. Students finished the day with a look at why businesses should target sustainability, touching on an important area of the A Level Business course.



### ASPIRE: HUMANITIES CULTURAL VISIT TO LONDON

ASPIRE students thoroughly enjoyed their cultural visit to London, being regaled by Varndean lecturer, Jacob Lund, on paintings in the National Gallery - Caravaggio was a particular favourite!

After exploring Covent Garden, a talk in the British Museum on themes from antiquity was followed by a lecture at UCL on Early Modern Europe and the role of jokes and laughter in creating community. A drinks reception followed, where our students could network with current UCL students and lecturers.



### EDUCATION & EARLY YEARS VISIT DRUSILLAS PARK

In October and in February, T Level Education & Early Years and Foundation Level Childcare students went to Drusillas Park for a fun and educational day out. Students got to handle a selection of interesting animals, including cockroaches, a millipede, a chinchilla and an armadillo. Everyone loved learning about the animals, as well as enjoying the rides and even the miniature train!

### ROMAN HISTORY COMES ALIVE

Classical Civilisation students went on a trip to Rome just before half term. Roman history came alive in the Forum, with its public spaces for politics, religion and market, and at the Colosseum, designed by emperors to entertain the crowds. A morning at the Pantheon brought students in touch with the fascination of pure geometry and clever craftsmanship, whilst visits to some of the earliest churches dazzled us with their riot of gilt backgrounds, mosaics and marbled floors. Seeing St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican made everyone reflect on Rome as the Eternal City, whilst the last few hours spent walking around the remains of the port city Ostia showed the more homely, every-day Rome of bakers, millers, oil merchants, and community

theatres and temples. A special thank you to Varndean tutor, Kate, who talked us through Michelangelo's breathtaking *Pieta*, and Marta, and enlivened one of the coach journeys with an Ancient Theatre quiz!



### GEOGRAPHY STUDENTS VISIT PORTSMOUTH

In February the Geography department headed to Portsmouth for a day of urban fieldwork, investigating regeneration, gentrification and deprivation. Despite the poor weather conditions, the students enthusiastically trialled a range of data collection techniques in different locations around the city. A highlight of the day was a trip up the Spinnaker Tower which, despite the cloud cover, provided some interesting views of the city. They were also welcomed by Portsmouth University for a short lecture on the impact of studentification in the local area, and an introduction to what studying Geography at university is like.



# CREATIVE ARTS



## VANESSA MARR INSPIRES A LEVEL TEXTILES STUDENTS

We were incredibly fortunate to welcome inspirational artist, Vanessa Marr, to Varndean Sixth Form College back in October. Vanessa introduced her 'Domestic Dusters' project to our first and second year A Level Textiles students and truly inspired everyone present. The Domestic Dusters project transforms the humble yellow duster into a platform for women's voices, combining craft, activism and storytelling. Students talked about craftivism and the power of textiles to communicate ideas and stand up for what they believe in. It was then their turn to create some dusters that they could share with Vanessa and potentially add to her project.

Vanessa then returned back to college later in November to view the work the students had created. It was an absolute privilege to get involved with this project and the more students and staff learn about it, the more special it has become. Thanks so much to Vanessa for taking the time to visit us.

went on to study Hand Embroidery at The Royal School of Needlework where she recently graduated.

For this year's Hand & Lock Prize competition, applicants were asked to draw inspiration from heritage, tradition, and memory, explore the role of museums and cultural institutions as guardians of our collective stories; venture into the unseen world of archives and storage rooms to uncover hidden gems and create breath-taking

works of art, and reflect on the value we place on different objects, comparing the aesthetics of popular and overlooked items.

Charlotte's design took 741 hours to make with 14-16 hour long days and her former tutors, Gail Eastwood, Jill Hurst and Helen Brewer, could not be more proud. Charlotte is now off to the Knit and Stitch Show at Harrogate next and has ideas about a new piece revisiting her previous war research.

## FORMER VARNDEAN TEXTILES STUDENT, CHARLOTTE FARRANT, WINS HAND & LOCK PRIZE!

Huge congratulations to former Varndean Sixth Form College Textiles student, Charlotte Farrant, who has won the 'Student Fashion' category in the Hand & Lock Prize!

Charlotte (formerly of Downlands Community College) studied A Level Textiles, A Level 3D Design and BTEC Environmental Sustainability at Varndean from 2020-2022 and



## FORMER STUDENT RETURNS TO INSPIRE 3D DESIGN STUDENTS

In January, our 3D Design students welcomed back former Varndean student Jack Pattison. Having studied 3D Design at Varndean four years ago, Jack went on to complete a degree in Product & Furniture Design at Plymouth University. During his visit, he shared his experiences of university life, talked through his design journey since leaving Varndean, and presented his degree work.

Jack also showcased his award-winning pewter point pencil, which won the Pewter Live Student Competition 2024 and was exhibited at the V&A as part of the Pewter Live exhibition, offering students a valuable insight into professional design practice and opportunities beyond college.



## FORMER STUDENTS EXHIBIT THEIR WORK AT 'WHY ME?' EXHIBITION

Congratulations to former Varndean Photography students, Felix Preston and Alfie Drew, who recently had their work exhibited at 35 North Gallery in Brighton. The exhibition titled 'Why Me?' was aimed to spread awareness about how blessed we are, and shed light on the less fortunate through art. The exhibition focused on issues such as homelessness, the exploitation of child soldiers during the war... and more.

Both Felix and Alfie are currently studying at The Met, Brighton; Felix is undertaking the Photography/UAL Foundation Diploma in Art & Design, and Alfie the Art & Design/UAL Foundation Diploma in Art & Design. Both students left Varndean Sixth Form College last summer having studied A Levels in Photography and Graphic Design.



ROSIE IS PICTURED HERE IN WELS, AUSTRIA WITH HER TROPHY.

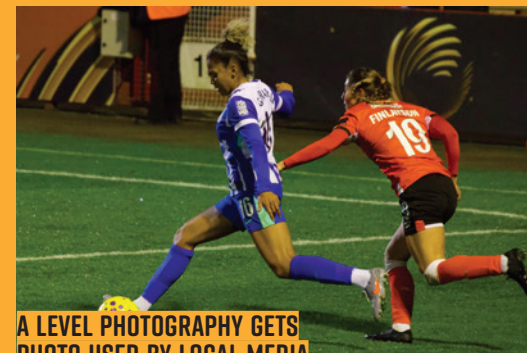
## ROSIE WINS YET AGAIN!

Another competition and another trophy for Rosie! Congratulations again to Year 2 Film Production student, Rosie Merat Brandwood who recently won her age category in the YOUKI International Youth Media Festival in Austria, for her documentary 'The Freedom of the Sea'.

The YOUKI International Youth Media Festival originated in 1998 and has been the place where young people, cinema, music and media come together. YOUKI supports newcomers to the film industry and gets children and young people excited about cinema and film.

Rosie's documentary 'The Freedom of the Sea' depicts the story of Rosie's own family, whom, having emigrated to Brighton in the wake of the Iranian revolution in the 1970s, discuss the difficult decision to leave their home, and the way being able to swim in the sea together is a perfect encapsulation of the freedom they found in the UK. Her film was selected from thousands of entries submitted and won the main prize in the 13-17 years category.

**STOP PRESS:** Rosie has also just been announced as the winner in the Under 18s category of the Northampton Film Festival for her other film 'Peaches'.



## A LEVEL PHOTOGRAPHY GETS PHOTO USED BY LOCAL MEDIA

Congratulations to Year 1A Level Photography student, Ella Linscott, who has had her football image used by the Sussex Express.

Ella's photo taken at Brighton & Hove Albion Women's match against Charlton Athletic at the Broadfield Stadium, Crawley, on 12 November shows Brighton's defender, Jorelyn Carabali, about to deliver a cross. Ella is delighted that she has now been asked to take more photos for the reporter.



## BRIGHTON'S YOUNG PEOPLE LEAD THE WAY IN TACKLING SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Students from schools and colleges across Brighton and Hove had the opportunity to participate in a Citizens Brighton & Hove debate on the impact of social media on mental health, when they met with Peter Kyle MP, Minister for Trade and Business, and Cllr Jacob Taylor, Deputy Leader of Brighton and Hove City Council.

The meeting followed the launch of Human Flourishing and Social Media Report, a report and set of recommendations published by Brighton & Hove Citizens, a coalition of schools, faith institutions, and

community organisations. Co-authored by school and college students and the University of Sussex, the report highlights the voices of over 1,600 young people across the city, calling for bold, practical action to improve youth mental health and human connection.

The Report is the latest milestone in Brighton & Hove Citizens' ongoing campaign to make the city a national leader in youth mental health. Following previous successes – including securing £400,000

of council funding for in-school counselling – the alliance continues to show how community organising can deliver real change, powered by the energy and vision of young people.

“Brighton & Hove has a proud history of youth leadership,” said Donna Marie Janson, Principal at Varndean Sixth Form College. “Our young people are showing us what civic action looks like in the 21st century – thoughtful, evidence-based, and hopeful.”

## FESTIVE ECARD DESIGN WINNER



Congratulations to Year Two students Isobel Steel, Martha Phillips, and Ruby Walker, who are the 2025 joint winners of our Festive eCard design competition. Isobel (formerly of Durrington High School) is studying A Levels in Classical Civilisation, Early Modern History and Philosophy, Martha (formerly of Davison High School) is studying Computer Games Development, Classical Civilisation and Environmental Science, whilst Ruby (formerly of Blatchington Mill)

is studying Classical Civilisation, Early Modern History and English Language.

The senior management team felt the brilliant design really captures the festive feeling and is being used as this year's official Varndean Sixth Form College ecard. The winners each received a well-deserved gift voucher.



Our Maths students received fantastic results in the Mathematical Competition for Girls (MCG), run by the UK Mathematics Trust in September. The competition is designed to encourage interest in mathematics and develop problem-solving skills among young female mathematicians across the UK.

Two of our entrants, Lilja Basu and Martha Wilson, achieved a highly coveted Distinction, and three more students, Vondra Osaretin, Imogen Packham and Kinga Brinkmann, earned a commendable Merit!

Congratulations to all eight girls who entered the demanding competition this year! We are incredibly proud of their hard work and their results are a testament to their exceptional mathematical talent.

Pictured with College Principal, Donna-Marie Janson and Maths tutor, Laurie Trott is: Vondra Osaretin, Faith McGuire-Davis and Imogen Packham



## T LEVEL EDUCATION & EARLY YEARS STUDENTS ON ICE!

First and second year Education and Early Years students took to the ice at The Royal Pavilion ice rink as a celebratory end of term trip. The trip was a fantastic opportunity for team building, as students supported and encouraged one another, especially when things got a little slippery! A truly festive activity and fun experience for a wonderful group of students!

## EARLY YEARS STAR IN THE MAKING

Our wonderful first year Early Years student, Lily Craigs, won January's 'Student of The Month' at her placement at Bright Horizons in Burgess Hill. The nursery shared some wonderful feedback! “You consistently demonstrate a genuine passion for learning and proactivity in working towards your goals, both within the setting and in your studies. Your confidence and curiosity when approaching new challenges have not gone unnoticed. You show resilience, determination, and a maturity beyond your experience, all of which make you an outstanding Early Years professional in the making”.



# CAREERS

## THE FLOUR POT BAKERY COMES TO VARDEAN

In February, 35 of our A Level Business & BTEC (Advanced) Business students attended an inspirational presentation given by the very successful local entrepreneur Oli Hyde (founder/owner of the artisan 'Flour Pot Bakery') and his Chief Operations Officer.

Students gained invaluable insight into the inception of The Flour Pot, the significant growth of the business and its successful

response to the changing external environment. Students heard superb real-world examples of the application of business theories including the use of 'vertical integration'. They gained appreciation of the importance of streamlining the distribution chain via the utilisation of the wholesale arm of their operation and the



development of their sister company 'The Milk Shed' coffee roasters. A lively Q & A session followed the presentation with top tips about how to run a successful business from the best in Brighton!



## CHARLOTTE POOK INSPIRES GAMING DEVELOPMENT STUDENTS

In February our Games Development students had the pleasure of welcoming guest speaker Charlotte Pook.

Charlotte is the Talent Acquisition Manager at leading games development studio Electric Square, whose partners include Microsoft and Apple Arcade.

She shared insights into the company's journey and achievements, and gave our students invaluable advice on breaking into the games industry. Passionate about making the industry more accessible, Charlotte inspired our learners to aim high and pursue their career ambitions with confidence. A huge thank you, Charlotte!

## VARDEAN'S LAW STUDENTS WORK WITH SUSSEX UNIVERSITY STREETLAW CLINIC TEAM

Final year University of Sussex law students from the 'StreetLaw Clinic' team were delighted to work with Vardean Sixth Form College A Level Law students on a bespoke 'Practical Legal Skills: Law in Context' programme. Over the course of three sessions, the StreetLaw team designed and delivered interactive sessions, including the key legal skills of client interviewing and presenting arguments in court.

The StreetLaw team (Alfred, Kimia, Elise & Ashley), pictured, were impressed firstly that the Vardean cohort gave up their lunchtimes to join them, and secondly, by how engaged and articulate they were. Commenting on the programme, they said: "We loved working with the Vardean Sixth Form College students on this programme and were blown away by how well they handled everything we threw at them! We're sure that if they go on to study Law at university, they'll do really well!"

Thank you to Jeanette Ashton, Associate Professor in Law at the University of Sussex and StreetLaw lead, for coordinating this.



## TALKING CREATIVE CAREERS WITH FUTURE CREATORS

In February our students stepped into the world of creative careers with an inspiring session from Future Creators & Coastal Catalyst.

Maddie Lock, freelance filmmaker and Creative Opportunities Producer at De La Warr Pavilion, shared their journey, reminding us that imagination, flexibility and resilience are key to building a creative career.

Tyler Mortimer-Wise and Ben McCormick, founders of TeamTBM, started their indie games studio in 2019 - aged just 13! Focusing on Roblox, they create games, build their own tech, and provide a platform for young creators to reach global audiences. They spoke about experimentation, collaboration and determination - and their commitment to opening up gaming pathways, especially for young people with SEND.

David Martin, founder of Hidden Door Festival, which launched in 2014 attracting 7,000+ people in its first year, now programmes music for Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival. He shared his insights about stepping stones into the industry and why creating your own opportunities matters.

Coastal Catalyst is a flagship program led by Future Creators (part of Brighton Dome, Festival and Music) and Talent Accelerator (part of De La Warr Pavilion), and funded by Arts Council England through the Place Partnership project. Its mission is to help young people convert their creativity into practical skills and career pathways in the creative sector.

Huge thank you to all our speakers for sharing their time, honesty and inspiration!

## COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENTS GET INSIGHT INTO STUDYING AT UNIVERSITY

Computer Science students had a fantastic visit from Dr Daniel Creed from the University of Sussex in early March. Daniel spoke to students about studying Computer Science at university, sharing insights into what the first year of the course at Sussex is like. He also spoke about how machine learning works, including a really interesting discussion on

AI accuracy. They were joined by Student Ambassador, Shubby George-Kehinde, who is currently in her second year at Sussex, who gave students a great overview of student life.



## MOCK INTERVIEWS WITH OCTOPUS ENERGY

On 13 March, we welcomed the amazing team from Octopus Energy to college. They ran 30-minute mock interviews for our Year 2 students, giving them fantastic interview practice and instant feedback to help build their confidence for the world of work. Students even received a cute cuddly octopus at the end!

Thank you to the Octopus Energy team for your time and support - it was a great experience for our students.



## SOCIOLOGY STUDENTS GAIN INSIGHT INTO STUDYING SOCIOLOGY AT UNIVERSITY

Dr Rosa Marvel, Senior Lecturer in Sociology from the University of Portsmouth visited the Vardean Sociology Department on Tuesday to deliver university taster sessions to our students. The first session covered Sociological perspectives on mental health, and the second covered migration and asylum seekers.

Students and staff thoroughly enjoyed the interactive and thought-provoking sessions, which highlighted the relevance and importance of Sociological thought and research in society today. Many thanks to Portsmouth University Sociology Department.

# CAREERS



## PROTECTIVE SERVICES STUDENTS DISCOVER DIVERSE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Protective Services students have gained an incredible insight into a wide range of career opportunities this last term.

In October, they spent a Leadership Day at Longmoor Barracks, where they took part in a range of activities aimed at enhancing leadership and team-building skills. This was followed by a visit to college by The Army's South East Engagement Team, who engaged students in different teamwork activities, as well as giving a presentation about careers in The Army. Students experienced a taste of the Army's physical requirement to test resilience, saw a demonstration of the equipment and skills used to administer battlefield first aid, as well as undertook a task in the dark to test individual and team command and control.

In February, students enjoyed a visit by the Royal Military Police where they learned about roles within the organisation and heard first-hand accounts of the experiences their personnel had encountered.



Students participated in a fun team-building exercise where they created a land map based on different criteria.

Also in February, students attended The British Army South East's 'Military Career Inspiration Day' at Sandown Park Racecourse. The event gave students the opportunity to discover everything the military has to offer, hear from motivational speakers, interact with serving soldiers, as well as explore the wide

range of opportunities available in a military career. They gained hands-on experience with military equipment, tried out simulators, and saw how the military supports people in both work and play, from working with horses to operating cutting-edge equipment, from dog handling to AI programming, and from drone piloting to performing as a military musician.

Later in March, a week-long series of career spotlight talks were held, where students had the opportunity to hear from a counter terrorism firearms officer, The British Army, a Lewes Prison officer, as well as a former student now serving as a Sussex Police Officer, and featuring in the Channel 4 tv series 'Night Coppers'.



# A RARE CHANCE TO SEE UK DEMOCRACY IN ACTION!

Varndean Sixth Form College Principal, Donna-Marie Janson, together with twelve of our International students and Assistant International Student Manager, Shaun Clark, were invited by James McCleary MP to the Houses of Parliament in November. Donna-Marie took part in presentations and discussions on the challenges facing UK universities. The evening included expert panel talks, a lively Q&A, and even a short tour of the House of Commons, complete with a moment at the iconic dispatch boxes. A fascinating glimpse into how democracy works behind the scenes!



# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY FIESTA

In March our amazing Feminist Society organised a vibrant lunchtime fiesta to celebrate this year's International Women's Day on March 8th.

Students enjoyed live music, a bake sale, a photo booth, and badge-making – all while raising money for the Malala Fund.

A huge well done to everyone involved for their hard work in making the event such a success. Your energy, creativity, and teamwork made it a truly joyful and inspiring celebration!





## VARNDEAN HOSTS VISITORS FROM GYEONGSANGBUK-DO OFFICE OF EDUCATION IN KOREA

On Thursday 15 January, Varndean Sixth Form College played host to 24 Korean visitors who came to learn more about the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme and how we implement the qualification as the only state-funded provider in Sussex.

The delegation consisted of Principals, Head Teachers, teaching and admin staff from various middle and elementary schools from the Gyeong-sangbuk region of Korea, as well as the Chairperson of the Education Committee and Director of the Education Bureau. They were

also joined by the Head of the IB World Schools who came to visit Varndean for the occasion.

Guests were provided with presentations on the structure of the IB Diploma and how the programme could be implemented in Gyeong-sangbuk-do, an overview of Varndean Sixth Form College and the study programmes we offer, the learning experiences and personal growth of students studying the IB, followed by a Q&A and a tour of our college with the opportunity to view our students in lessons.

The morning concluded with a group photo to mark this momentous occasion, as well as the opportunity to exchange gifts.



## VARNDEAN ENGLISH LITERATURE TUTOR, JACOB LUND, CELEBRATES NEW PUBLICATIONS IN 'THE TABLET' AND 'THE USE OF ENGLISH'

The work of English Literature tutor and Aspire Programme Coordinator, Jacob Lund, has again been published in the English Association journal, *The Use of English*. The autumn/winter issue contains four more poems from Jacob's latest collection, *Cadential*, a book about mortality. *The Use of English* was the first journal to publish work from Jacob's most recent poetry collection, *Acoustic Mirrors* (Spectral Pixels Press, 2024). He was also recently commissioned by *The Tablet*, the international Catholic weekly, to write a feature on the subject of his new work: this will be out in its Christmas issue. Congratulations Jacob.



## GEOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION WORLD WISE QUIZ

Once again Varndean Sixth Form College hosted the hugely successful Geographical Association World Wise Quiz for secondary school Geography students.

This year there were a record number of 19 teams from 8 different schools and this year's winners were Brighton College. All teams did very well and the results were quite close.

Brighton Geographical Association wish to thank the College for hosting the event with such efficiency. Principal, Donna Marie Janson, said: "It was lovely to see Key Stage 4 students at our college enjoying the event and showing their passion for Geography. It was a really feel-good event."



## STUDENTS AND STAFF CELEBRATE JAPANESE CULTURE

Students and staff had an amazing time celebrating Japanese culture in November. They enjoyed delicious Japanese food, beautiful origami gifts, and even got their names written in Japanese calligraphy.

This special lunch, organised by our incredible international students and International Student Manager Shaun Clark, supported Onigiri Action - a global campaign that turns sharing photos into helping others.

For every photo of onigiri (Japanese rice balls) shared with #OnigiriAction, five school meals are provided to children in need around the world. Since its launch in 2015, the Onigiri Action campaign has provided 10.17 million school meals and showcases the Japanese tradition of making onigiri for loved ones.



## LEGAL SKILLS HUB

Varndean Law and Sussex University Law departments spent the Autumn term collaborating on developing our second-year students who are aiming to become lawyers. Third year Law undergraduates trained our students in legal research, interviewing skills and oracy; all vital skills needed in their intended profession. Students were enabled to research current key legal areas directly related to 16 - 24-year-olds. Posters have also been designed and distributed across college to help others.

Pictured are: Alliyah Ouassa, Bluebell Baynes, Lili Kordely and Mia Bassett



## LGBT+ HISTORY MONTH: CELEBRATING SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Throughout February, Varndean Sixth Form College celebrated LGBT+ History Month. This year's theme was 'Science & Innovation and Schools OUT', the founders of UK LGBT+ History Month, chose five scientists and innovators recognising the contributions of LGBT+ people:

- **Barbara Burford** - Medical researcher who helped establish NHS equality & diversity guidelines
- **Charles Beyer** - Locomotive engineer and founding member of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers
- **Elke Mackenzie** - Botanist researching lichens in Antarctica
- **Jemma Redmond** - Biotechnologist developing 3D bioprinting for tissues and organs
- **Robert Boyle** - Founder of modern chemistry and the scientific method

Our College library highlighted some of the books and resources available - celebrating the people behind the progress.



# SCIENCE



## MEDVETDENT STUDENTS EXCEL IN OXFORD'S PRACTICAL ETHICS & RESPONSIBILITY COMPETITION

We are delighted to celebrate the success of our MedVetDent students in this year's Practical Ethics and Responsibility Competition (PERC), a prestigious national competition run by the Uehiro Oxford Institute at the University of Oxford.

The competition invites students in Years 11-13 from across the UK to produce short videos exploring complex ethical questions and

examining the role of responsibility in addressing them.

We are especially proud that our combined Year 1 and 2 team has been selected as a Top 4 finalist, earning an invitation to present at the Oxford final on 24th March. Their video, "Should adolescents be allowed to make autonomous decisions about long-term psychiatric conditions?", was created by Immy Butler (Team

Leader), Emily Crisp, Lila Crockett and Isobel Downer. Judges praised the entry for being 'well-structured, deeply researched and impressively thoughtful.'

Two additional teams achieved Highly Commended recognition, placing them in the Top 10 nationally.

Year 1 team, Africa Edu Nso (Team Leader), Viona Gashi, Syeda Hasan, Yoanna Kim and Kimberly Muchongwe produced the video "Who should be responsible for deciding whether a premature baby facing lifelong complications should be sustained in NICU?". Their submission came extremely close to a finalist position, with additional judges brought in to break the tie. Reviewers described the work as clear, original, nuanced and powerfully argued.

A Year 2 team consisting of Valerio Shokralla Hanna (Team Leader), Ahmad Al-Otoun, Beatrice Equi and Masse Rabani received a Highly Commended award for their video "The ethical impacts of CRISPR technology on gene editing and agriculture." Judges highlighted the depth of research and thoughtful discussion around power and communication in emerging technologies.

All students were mentored by our MedVetDent Coordinator, Emma-Jayne Hanner, who has supported them throughout the competition and will accompany the finalists to Oxford for the national final.

Congratulations to every student involved. Their dedication, curiosity and willingness to engage with complex ethical issues demonstrate the intellectual ambition and collaborative spirit we value so highly in our MedVetDent programme.



## ANATOMY AND PATHOLOGY WORKSHOP AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Last term saw our talented medical school applicants visit the Royal College of Surgeons to attend an interesting and highly informative Anatomy and Pathology Workshop led by surgeons specialising in Respiratory Health, Digestive Disorders and Gastroenterology, Vascular Health, as well as Hepatic and Renal Health.

Students viewed pathological specimens from diseased tissues of patients who had died from various conditions and disorders. Surgeons then quizzed our students on disease profiles in a Q&A session, allowing students to gain valuable knowledge of anatomy and physiology under healthy conditions prior to learning about the pathological features under diseased conditions.

The Anatomy and Pathology Museum holds exhibits of some of the most impressive collections of human pathological specimens. The workshop was followed by a library tour and a talk by some of the College's medical archivists who showcased compilations of medical drawings made by doctors and surgeons akin to a potted version of The History of Medicine.

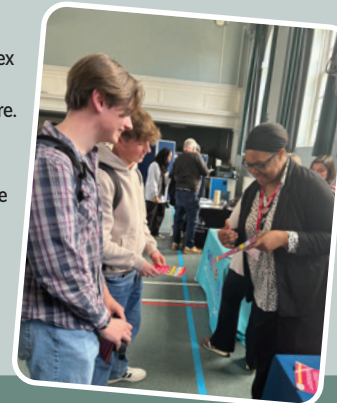
The trip led by Biology Tutor, Yaso Shan, took place at the famed Hunterian Museum, so named after the renowned 18th century surgeon and anatomist John Hunter. It includes the display of over 2,000 anatomical preparations from Hunter's original collection, alongside instruments, equipment, models, paintings and archive material.

## STUDENTS EXPLORE APPRENTICESHIPS

We were excited to host our Annual Apprenticeship Fair in March.

Students had the chance to meet representatives from a wide range of organisations including Network Rail, Rampion Wind Farm, the Ministry of Justice, Sussex Police, the NHS, SIGTA, WATES Construction, HOP Consulting, the University of Sussex Apprenticeship Team, BHCC, Chichester College Group and more.

It was a fantastic opportunity for students to learn more about apprenticeships as well as explore the pathways and opportunities available to them. A huge thank you to everyone who joined us!



## STEM FEST 2025

November saw Varndean Sixth Form College hold its annual STEM FEST, a week-long programme designed to inspire students through direct engagement. The event saw talks from leading professionals in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Specialist guest speakers included a representative from the Royal Astronomical Society, a veterinary surgeon, an A&E consultant from Worthing Hospital, Sussex Police crime scene investigators, computer scientists from the University of Surrey, the University of Brighton's Adult Nursing admissions team, and a former oncology and end-of-life nurse. Each speaker provided insight into their professional journey, the nature of their current roles, and the skills required within their respective fields.

Although primarily aimed at students studying STEM subjects, the event was also open to students in related areas such as Health & Social Care, Psychology, Geography and Environmental Science. STEM FEST continues to serve as a valuable opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of potential career pathways at a crucial stage of their academic development.





## VARNDEAN PLAYS HOST TO TEACHER TRAINEES FROM GOTHENBURG

February saw Varndean Sixth Form College play host to 11 teacher trainees from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

The trainees were in the UK for a short time studying at the University of Sussex, during which time they had the opportunity to visit Varndean in order to observe English A Level and GCSE lessons, meet with teaching staff, and gain an insight into the UK further education system. The visit provided a valuable

chance to compare approaches to teaching, learning, and student support. Discussions around delivery of the curriculum, pedagogy, inclusion, and classroom culture encouraged reflection and fresh perspectives on everyday teaching practice.

The visit strengthened links between Varndean Sixth Form College and both the University of Sussex and University of Gothenburg.



## HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE STUDENTS RAISE FUNDS FOR CHARITY

Some very festive Health & Social Care students volunteered to help raise money for 20 different local charities on Brighton & Hove Buses 'Santa Bus' on 11th December. Great fun was had by all and lots of money raised.

## GREEN CAREERS WEEK CELEBRATION

Varndean Sixth Form College celebrated Green Careers Week in November, with students encouraged to consider how the knowledge and skills gained from their courses could lead to planet-saving careers.

The first event of the week saw students, including many members of the Carbon Literacy enrichment, attend a talk from the Knepp Wildland Foundation about the rewilding project and the wide range of careers available, from livestock management to community engagement.

Wednesday saw a visit from the

Sussex Dolphin Project, with a fascinating introduction to the local cetaceans that can be spotted from our local beaches. The talk gave students a fascinating insight into career paths in conservation, stressing that a traditional scientific research background is not always necessary!

The week ended with a packed talk in conjunction with Politics Society from The Environment Agency. Students gained an insight into how our local Environment Agency works to protect communities from flooding and the risks of climate

change. Students were incredibly engaged and asked some fascinating questions about how water companies can be held to account over pollution. They were also able to learn about the fantastic Degree Apprenticeship scheme that they offer.



## GREEN WEEK

We celebrated our Green Week from 9-13 March.

Organised by the Carbon Literacy Qualification group, we welcomed Dr Will Lock from the University of Sussex, who delivered an excellent talk "Climate Justice - Beyond Carbon Footprints", and later in the week we heard from Dr Olivia Taylor, also from the University of Sussex, who spoke to our Geography students about studying climate change at university. It was a fascinating talk that explored the complexities of climate change beyond A Level and gave students valuable insight into where studying Geography at university can lead.

Other events included The Big Green Quiz on Tuesday and a full vegan menu in our café on Wednesday.

To complete the event, on Friday our CLQ group showed off their fantastic baking skills with a delicious vegan bake sale, highlighting how plant-based foods can help reduce our carbon footprint while still tasting amazing! Together they raised over £50 for the Real Junk Food Project in Brighton helping tackle food waste in the local community.



## UKMT SENIOR MATHS CHALLENGE

On 9th October, we were delighted to celebrate the exceptional performance of our Maths students the UK Mathematics Trust (UKMT) Senior Maths Challenge. This demanding national competition provides a fantastic opportunity for students to test their problem-solving skills and push their mathematical boundaries.

An impressive 46 students from the Vardean Sixth Form College took part in this year's challenge, demonstrating a strong commitment to mathematics. Their hard work and dedication have paid off with truly outstanding results across the board:

**Gold Certificates:** 5 students achieved a prestigious Gold certificate, placing them among the top performers nationally!

**Silver Certificates:** 13 students earned a well-deserved Silver certificate.

**Bronze Certificates:** 17 students were awarded a Bronze certificate.

A special round of applause goes to Bruno Amaya, Ben Giesl, Eden Aborg, Callum Shuttlewood and Lukas



Buckler whose exceptional Gold level scores qualified them for the next stage of the competition, the Andrew Jobbings Senior Kangaroo!

The Senior Kangaroo is an invitation-only follow-on round for the highest achievers in the Senior Maths Challenge. Qualification is a significant achievement in itself, requiring advanced problem-solving techniques and deep mathematical insight. We wish these students the very best of luck as they tackle this elite challenge!



## A LEVEL SOCIOLOGY CONFERENCE 2026

In January our sociology students attended the A Level Sociology Conference 2026 at University College London. They heard a variety of talks by eminent sociologists including: Being young, male and Muslim in Luton; Smartphone moral panics; How students are 'othered' in schools through intersections of gender, race and class; and How mothers help intergenerational mobility. A really inspiring and varied day.



## SUPPORTING YOUNG CARERS

On 11 March, Paula Melis from the Brighton & Hove Young Carers Centre visited the college to raise awareness of young carers by celebrating Young Action Day 2026, the theme of which was 'Fair Futures for Young Carers'.



## VARDEAN SIXTH FORM COLLEGE WIN PLACE IN EUROPEAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT DEBATING COMPETITION NATIONAL FINAL

A team of seven Year 1 students participated in the prestigious European Youth Parliament UK debating competition at Bede's School on 11 March and earned themselves a place in the national final in September.

The team, comprising of Ottie Gibson, Ellie King, Maya Klein, Sofia Lau, Omar Mohammed, Ned White and Harry Wright competed against eight other schools and colleges and will now compete in the national final in Newcastle in September. The team debated major political, economic and social issues, including topics such as culture and education and African economic development.



## VARDEAN FOUNDATION YEAR STUDENTS BEGIN WORK EXPERIENCE AND SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAMME

At the end of November, Vardean Sixth Form College's Foundation Year students took part in their first day of Work Experience and Social Action activities.

The day began with students hearing from the Careers Team about future options, self-assessing their current skills and taking part in team building exercises. In the afternoon, the Student Union spoke about the college's work with Brighton & Hove Citizens highlighting the power of Social Action within the community.

It was then the turn of the students themselves to start planning their own Social Action events ready to take part in our Social Action Fair in March. Local employers were on hand to advise on project planning. We are very proud of our students who engaged so positively with every part of the day, making it a successful event.



## UK BEBRAS CHALLENGE

In November, nine students from Vardean Sixth Form College's Code n Cake Enrichment group took on the UK Bebras Challenge. Run by the Raspberry Pi Foundation, the online competition lets students test their logical thinking and problem-solving skills through a series of interactive tasks. The challenge acts as a warm-up for the Bebras Coding Challenge, which our students will tackle later this spring. Congratulations to everyone and good luck for the next stage.





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**STARTING FROM SEPTEMBER, OUR 2026/27**

# ADULT COUNSELLING COURSES

## LEVELS 2-4



More details and how to apply coming soon at [www.varndean.ac.uk/adult-education](http://www.varndean.ac.uk/adult-education)  
**TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION**



### VIP DAY FOR YEAR 1 STUDENTS

On Friday 20 March, our Year 1 students received a taste of the real world of work through Varndean Sixth Form College's Internship Programme

Led by our careers team and supported by fantastic volunteers from the corporate finance sector, students took part in speed networking, team-building challenges, and gained valuable insights into the power of communication and future career pathways.

A huge thank you to all our students and volunteers for bringing such energy and enthusiasm – what a fantastic morning it was!



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### WATCH OUR PERFORMING ARTS STUDENTS IN 'THE THREEPENNY OPERA'



On Thursday 23rd April, our second year BTEC Performing Arts (Acting) students will be performing in a production of 'The Threepenny Opera' at The Ropetackle Arts Centre in Shoreham-by-Sea.

This 1928 Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's savage and stylish musical satire exposes the hypocrisies of a society where morality is a luxury the poor cannot afford. This will be a showcase for the students - theatre at its most revolutionary, a cynical, sexy, and spectacular look at a world where beggars and bankers are one and the same.

Come along and celebrate the exciting work of our Year 2 Acting students. Tickets are now on sale, get yours using the QR code above before they sell out.