

NEW STUDENT UNION



RESULTS DAY



IB RESULTS DAY

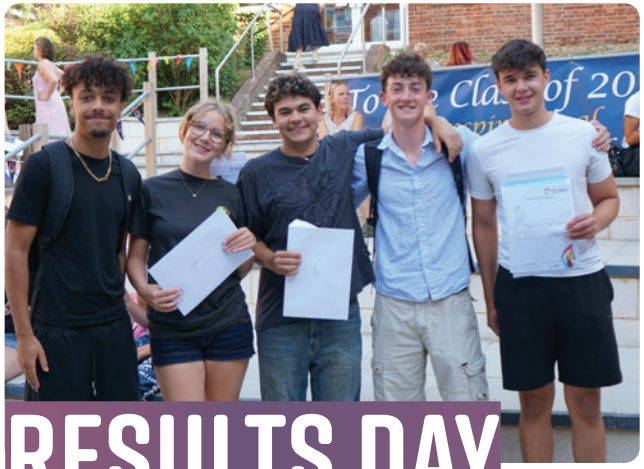
Varndean Sixth Form College

UPDATE

AUTUMN 2026



CREATIVE ARTS SHOWCASE



RESULTS DAY

ANOTHER YEAR OF IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

Varndean Sixth Form College is celebrating another year of impressive academic achievement, with students securing excellent results across A Level and Level 3 vocational qualifications. The results reflect the dedication, determination and talent of Varndean's students, alongside the continued commitment and support of all its staff.

The College has recorded an impressive A Level pass rate of 98%, with over 55% of grades awarded at A*-B and a quarter at A* or A grade, the highest ever. With over three-quarters of students achieving grades between A*-C, the results demonstrate continued excellence.

Excellent results were also seen across the College's vocational programme, with a 98% pass rate and more than 50% of students achieving the highest grades of Distinction or Distinction*. Together, the results reflect the breadth and strength of provision at Varndean Sixth Form College and the impressive achievements of students across its diverse range of courses.

College Principal Donna-Marie Janson expressed her delight at the results, saying:

"I am incredibly proud of our students today. These results represent two years of hard work, determination and resilience, and behind every grade is an individual young person with their own story, ambitions and hopes for what comes next.







To see such impressive results across A Levels and vocational qualifications, alongside the remarkable International Baccalaureate results our students achieved in July, is a wonderful achievement for our whole College community. Our staff care deeply about our students and work incredibly hard to help every young person flourish, and these results are testament to that.

Results Day is always about much more than the numbers for us. It is about celebrating how far our students have come and everything that now lies ahead of them. Whether they are going on to university, an apprenticeship, employment, travelling or something completely different, we are enormously proud of them and cannot wait to see what they do next."

Congratulations and well done to all our exceptional students, and we wish them the very best of luck for their future careers.



NEW STUDENT UNION LEADERSHIP TEAM

Our new 2026-27 Student Union Leadership team are up and running and had their first meeting with the College Principal, Donna-Marie Janson, in May.

Pictured are our new representatives, together with Donna-Marie Janson, as they prepare to embark upon the exciting role ahead of them. Over a light lunch, the students chatted about some of their ideas for the coming year. First up was to help arrange the leavers party for our Year 2 students.

Congratulations to the newly elected team, the college looks forward to working with you all over the next 12 months. A special thanks also goes to our outgoing Student Union for all their extreme hard work and dedication, and to all those who were involved in the election process.

The new SU team comprises of:
Apollo & Zeb - Joint Presidents
Veronika - Communications
Kit - Wellbeing
Eva - Enrichment
Leo - Environment
Maya - Marketing & Events
Shelyn - Charity
Bertie - EDI
Ilona - Democracy & Voice





SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT HEAR TALK ABOUT BLACK OFFICER PROGRESSION

In October, Dr Kul Verma visited Varndean's Sociology department to discuss racism within the police. Dr Verma is a former police officer with a doctorate in Black Officer Progression, who spoke to students about his career in policing as well as his research into the police and institutional racism. It was a fascinating session which allowed students to apply their sociological studies to real life and demonstrated how the skills that sociology develops can be applied to real life jobs.



MATHS STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN MATHEMATICAL COMPETITION FOR GIRLS

We are thrilled to celebrate ten of our students who participated in the Mathematical Competition for Girls (MCG)

Launched by the UKMT in 2025 to run alongside the highly popular Mathematical Olympiad for Girls (MOG), this new initiative provides an incredible platform to challenge and inspire young female mathematicians across the UK. With MOG entries hitting nearly 5,000 in 2024, the MCG opens the door for even more students to engage in advanced problem solving.

A huge congratulations from everyone in the Varndean Sixth Form College Maths Department, we are incredibly proud of your achievements!

RECENT TRIPS

CHICHESTER HARBOUR FIELD TRIP

The sun was shining for our A Level Environmental Science students who visited Chichester Harbour back in May for their first ecological fieldwork study, an essential component of their course. They were taught important techniques on sampling, with a view to studying the process of sand dune and salt marsh succession at East Head Spit and Snowhill Creek; both sites at West Wittering beach. They also learnt about coastal processes, including the many plant adaptations at the regions which enable them to thrive at the location which is a harsh environment for plants.

Emma-Jayne Hanner, Programme Lead for the course at Varndean Sixth Form College said "This field trip provided an invaluable opportunity for our Environmental Science students to apply their classroom learning in a real-world coastal environment. Through hands-on ecological sampling and the study of succession, students developed essential practical fieldwork skills while gaining a deeper understanding of coastal ecosystems, conservation and environmental management. Working alongside the Chichester Harbour Conservancy also highlighted the importance of nature recovery and habitat protection, greatly enriching the Environmental Science provision at Varndean, and inspiring students to engage with contemporary environmental challenges."

The Chichester Harbour Conservancy (CHC) who run the conservation work at the site carry out crucial Nature Recovery Programmes which include education and training of young people and other professionals in Geography, Environmental Science and Biology on the principles of preserving unique habitats and ecosystems. Chichester Harbour was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in November 2023.



PROTECTIVE SERVICES EXPLORE HMS PRINCE OF WALES AIRCRAFT CARRIER!

Our Protective Services students were given a fantastic opportunity to step aboard HMS Prince Of Wales aircraft carrier at HM Naval Base, Portsmouth in September.

They participated in activities on the hangar deck - climbing wall, shooting galley - explored the flight deck and led by the ships medical officer had a tour of the crew's quarters. They also had a chance to view the weapons bay and exceptionally, to explore the bridge from where the captain dispatches orders. Students gained an insight into the routines, teamwork and responsibilities involved in living and working aboard the ship, as well as hearing direct from crew about their experiences. All combined to provide a memorable day out.





STUDENTS EXPERIENCE QUANTUM TECHNOLOGY AT SUSSEX UNIVERSITY

In July, our Year 1 Computer Science students visited the University of Sussex Quantum Centre to explore the next generation of technology and get a firsthand look at degree-level study.

The day included:

- A presentation from a Computer Science PhD student on self-driving cars.
- A talk by Professor Winfried Hensinger about Quantum technology and Quantum Computing.
- A look inside three active Quantum laboratories, led by PhD students.

The students had a great time learning about studying at university level and also the future of Computing.



BUSINESS STUDENTS VISIT GATWICK AIRPORT

In June, Year 1 Business students learned about the airport business by visiting Gatwick Airport, one of the biggest employers in the South East. Students were given an overview of the finances of the business, including an insight into their revenue streams. A recent graduate scheme employee then gave a personal insight into recruitment and working for Gatwick. The students finished by designing and building electric cars to race. A fun and competitive end to a fascinating insight into the business of an airport.



POLITICS STUDENTS AT LIB DEM CONFERENCE

In September, Year 2 A Level Politics students attended the Lib Dem Party Annual Conference at the Brighton Centre. The debates included protected speech, access to justice, as well as health care. It was great to get out of the classroom and see politics in action, as well as some great examples for exams!



POLITICS IN PRACTICE: UK SUPREME COURT & PARLIAMENT VISIT

In October our Year 1 Politics students swapped the classroom for the UK Supreme Court and the Houses of Parliament. The students got to experience the heart of British democracy, explored centuries of history, and gained a greater insight into how the UK's legal and political systems work in real life. And the weather couldn't have been better!



YEAR 1 PROTECTIVE SERVICES STUDENTS ATTEND LEADERSHIP DAY AT LONGMOOR BARRACKS

Representing the college alongside 250 peers from across the South of England, our Year 1 Protective Services students participated in a series of rigorous challenges designed to test and develop their leadership, teamwork, and determination.

RECENT TRIPS



ECONOMICS TRIP TO CAMBRIDGE

In March, 14 of our Economics students headed to the University of Cambridge for an unforgettable insight into collegiate life. They were warmly welcomed at Fitzwilliam College with a talk on what makes a Cambridge education unique and how to navigate the application process. After exploring the college and enjoying lunch in the canteen, it was off to the world-renowned Economics Faculty for a demonstration of the Phillips machine by Professor Allan McRobie. When he asked for a volunteer to draw the circular flow diagram, one of our Varndean students stepped up and recreated the theoretical picture perfectly. After a brilliant talk, the students finished by soaking up the atmosphere in the Marshall Library before heading back to Brighton. A long but rewarding day.

GEOGRAPHY STUDENTS VISIT THE KNEPP ESTATE

Forty-four first year Geography students visited the Knepp Estate in June to learn about the rewilding project and to carry out their own field work. In the morning, they were treated to a walking safari to see the different habitats that have emerged as a result of rewilding and the introduction of grazing mammals. Despite the bad weather, the students were lucky enough to see storks in their nests, the new beaver lodges and some fallow deer.

In the afternoon they carried out their own fieldwork in the woodland to investigate carbon storage and soil infiltration rates, trialling methods that they can use in their own coursework. It was a fascinating day out and the students managed to stay enthusiastic through the rain and mud!



GEOGRAPHERS VISIT SHOREHAM BEACH

In April, first year Geographers headed to Shoreham beach for a day of coastal fieldwork. The students carried out a range of data collection techniques to investigate the impacts of longshore drift and coastal management on the beach, working hard to gather accurate data. Luckily the students were rewarded for their hard work with some sunshine in the afternoon as they completed their final methods!



MOCK TRIAL IN COURTROOM 101!

Two teams of highly motivated A Level Law Year 2 students competed in a mock trial before real magistrates who visited us from the Brighton Magistrates Court. The College's longstanding relationship with the Court meant that the Law Team could host three magistrates who were happy to sit through two trials with students playing the parts of witnesses, jury members, barristers, solicitors and legal advisors; there was even a court artist! Varndean's new court room itself was a big hit with the magistrates, one of whom mentioned that at one point they had forgotten that they weren't in a real courtroom in front of real barristers! This was a credit to our students who prepared and presented the case and turned up in court dress ready to argue their case.

FRESHERS' WEEK

During our annual Freshers' Week, new students visited our Freshers' Fair where they were able to collect an array of information from our college library team, Student Union, careers and wellbeing teams, as well as local providers such as Sussex Police, BMEYPP, Young Drivers, Brighton & Hove Sexual Health and Contraception Service, Brighton Food Bank, Meningitis Trust and YMCA.

The week also involved a variety of other fun activities, including a Freshers' Picnic, Scavenger Hunt, Bake Sale and a Social Mixer!



LEAVERS' EVENT

On June we celebrated our fabulous Year 2 students as they marked their final day of lessons at Varndean.

The event was brilliantly organised by our Student Union and featured a range of activities including a BBQ and ice cream van, inflatable sumo wrestling, photo booth, glitter tattoos and face painting, fairground games, candy floss machine, and music provided by our amazing Funk Band.

Principal, Donna-Marie Janson, said: "It has been an absolute pleasure and a privilege to get to know you. I know I speak for all staff at the college when I say that we will miss you enormously. You have brought energy, kindness, humour, talent and character to our community, and you have made Varndean a better place."

A huge thank you to all the staff and students who joined us to celebrate, and we wish all our students the very best of luck with their upcoming exams and every success in the future.









£4.44 MILLION BOOST FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AS VARNDEAN SIXTH FORM COLLEGE SECURES FUNDING FOR NEW SKILLS AND BUSINESS BUILDING

Varndean Sixth Form College has secured up to £4.44 million of government funding to create a new Skills and Business Building, representing a major investment in education for young people across Brighton & Hove and Sussex.

The funding, awarded through the Government's Post-16 Capacity Fund, will enable the College to create nine new teaching rooms, including dedicated space for business education, while transforming part of its campus by replacing temporary teaching accommodation with high-quality permanent facilities.

The new building will provide modern teaching and learning spaces and support the College in continuing to offer a broad and ambitious education and a breadth of opportunities to young people from across the city and wider Sussex area.

Donna-Marie Janson, Principal and CEO of Varndean Sixth Form College, said:
"This is fantastic news for the College and for young people across Brighton & Hove and Sussex. It is a significant investment in their education and in the opportunities we can continue to provide.

We are proud to provide young people with an ambitious, high-quality education and the opportunities they need to flourish. This funding means we can invest in new, permanent teaching spaces for our students, while continuing to offer the breadth of education and opportunity that is so important to us.

We are incredibly proud that this investment will benefit not only the students who are with us today, but generations of young people who will come through the College in the years ahead."

The new Skills and Business Building is expected to open to students in August 2028.

STUDENTS GAIN WORK EXPERIENCE WITH LABOUR MP CHRIS WARD

A huge thank you to Chris Ward MP for giving four of our students the opportunity of gaining work experience with him and his team last term.

This was a fantastic opportunity for them and they were able to share their thoughts on Labour introducing Votes at 16 and why they believe it matters for young people.

Maria thought that lowering the voting age to 16 is absolutely fair and an amazing idea! If 16-year-olds can work, pay taxes, join the armed forces, then they should have a say in elections too. She also expressed her belief that politics should be taught in PSHE lessons at school so that young people understand what they are voting for.

Matilda also thought that giving 16-year-olds the ability to vote is a positive thing and a good decision, however it does come with its negatives because of the lack of education about politics in secondary schools. She thinks learning about politics should be mandatory.

George too thought votes for 16 are a really good idea because decisions that the government makes affect people at the age of 16, but feels they might just vote on what their friends and family think.

Jenny would also argue that votes at 16 are a better step in the future. Not only does it enhance democracy by broadening the franchise and making democratic results more representative.



STUDENTS TAKE PART IN BRIGHTON AND HOVE CITIZENS ACTION DAY

In May, to mark Mental Health Awareness Week, students from Varndean Sixth Form College joined 120+ young people from schools and colleges across Brighton & Hove to reclaim the Council Chamber at Brighton Town Hall - transforming it into a space for action, creativity, accountability, and hope.

As leaders within Brighton & Hove Citizens, students came together to celebrate major wins already secured and to challenge city leaders to go further on the issues affecting young people today.

Together, the alliance has secured £600,000 so every secondary school in the city can access counselling support. Students shared powerful testimonies about the life-changing impact this support has had on them and their peers.

A huge moment came when Cllr Bella Sankey, the leader of Brighton and Hove City Council, confirmed that the counselling "pilot" is no longer a pilot - it is now a permanent part of the Council budget, meaning funding will continue automatically in the years ahead. A massive step forward for young people across our city.

Students also called on the Council to tackle digital isolation and help make Brighton & Hove the most playful city in the UK. Through creative activities, they mapped the barriers young people face across the city, with common themes:

- Activities are too expensive
- Many spaces feel unsafe
- Access to activities is too limited

From there, students began building practical solutions together - the first steps towards a city-wide Playfulness Manifesto.

Congratulations to every student who helped shape and lead the action, and to everyone who showed up with such energy, discipline, and determination.



NATIONAL SPEAK OUT CHALLENGE COMES TO SUSSEX

The Speakers Trust, a national charity aiming to get young people more confident in public speaking, held their National Speak Out Challenge final at The Old Market, Hove in July.

Our Assistant Principal, Jo Hambleton, was delighted to be invited to be part of a distinguished judging panel. Jo said: "There were ten secondary schools from across the county competing and each finalist had beaten tough competition to reach this stage. The standard was incredible, with students having written their own speeches on topics they were passion about. These ranged from tackling immigration, social injustice and climate change.The Speakers Trust is an incredible charity believing in the power of young people's voice. Varndean Sixth Form College were honoured to support them."

VARNDEAN GOES TO BRATISLAVA TO MEET PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS FROM EUROPE

Shaun Clark, our International Manager, was delighted to represent Varndean Sixth Form College at the Edu Expo in Bratislava recently. He met students and parents from Slovakia, Czechia, Austria and Hungary, and shared information about the exciting opportunities available to international students at Varndean Sixth Form College.





PERFECT SCORE FOR VARNDEAN SIXTH FORM COLLEGE IB STUDENT AS COHORT CELEBRATES OUTSTANDING RESULTS

There was plenty to celebrate for students at Varndean Sixth Form College in July, led by an extraordinary achievement from Arun Webb, formerly of Blatchington Mill School, who achieved the maximum possible score of 45 in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme.

A perfect score of 45 is achieved by only a very small proportion of IB students worldwide. It requires exceptional performance across six academic subjects, alongside the Diploma Core, which includes the Extended Essay, Theory of Knowledge and the Creativity, Activity and Service (CAS) programme. This places Arun in the top 1% of IB students worldwide.

Arun will now go on to study Social and Public Policy with Quantitative Methods at the University of Glasgow.

He was just one of a number of outstanding students celebrating success this year.

- **Iris Dury**, formerly of Blatchington Mill School, achieved 44 points and will study French and Beginners' Italian at the University of Oxford.
- **Toby Douglass**, formerly of Chailey School, achieved 43 points and will read Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at the University of Cambridge.
- **Elise McGivney**, formerly of Dorothy Stringer School, achieved 43 points, now taking a gap year.



- **Saskia Gualtieri Kros**, formerly of Varndean School, achieved 42 points and will study Biomedical Sciences at the University of Oxford.
- **Kas Coleman**, formerly of Brighton Waldorf School, achieved 41 points, also now taking a gap year.
- **Arthur Salisbury**, formerly of King's Academy Ringmer, achieved 40 points, taking a gap year before applying to study Civil Engineering.
- **Rosa Simanowitz**, formerly of Cardinal Newman Catholic School, achieved 40 points, also taking a gap year.

These remarkable achievements tell the story of a very special IB cohort, whose hard work, ambition and support for one another have shone throughout their time at Varndean.

Across the cohort:

- **100%** of students successfully achieved the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.
- The average score was **36 points**, significantly above the global average which equates to AAA at A level
- **15%** achieved **40 points or above**, placing them amongst the highest-achieving students this year which equates to A*A*A at A Level

Donna-Marie Janson, Principal and CEO of Varndean Sixth Form College, said:

"To achieve 45 out of 45 is simply extraordinary. It is one of the highest academic achievements a young person can attain anywhere in the world and reflects exceptional intellect, dedication and resilience. Arun should be immensely proud of what he has accomplished.

"What is particularly pleasing is that his success sits within such an exceptional cohort. To have so many students achieving 40 points and above, alongside places at Oxford, Cambridge and other leading universities, speaks volumes about the ambition of our students and the expertise and commitment of our staff.

"Most of all, I am incredibly proud of each and every one of our IB students. Every student has travelled their own unique journey through one of the world's most academically demanding programmes, overcoming different challenges and celebrating different successes along the way.

"Year after year, our IB students continue to impress me. They are curious, compassionate, resilient and determined to make a difference. They challenge themselves academically, but they also support one another, contribute to our college community and leave us as thoughtful, confident young adults who are ready to make their mark on the world.

"Watching these young people grow over the last two years has been one of the real privileges of this job. They inspire us every year with their kindness, their ambition and their belief that learning can change lives. All of us at Varndean are immensely proud of every single one of them, and we wish them every success and happiness as they begin the next exciting chapter of their lives."

Varndean Sixth Form College is the only state school or college in Sussex to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. Renowned for its academic breadth and intellectual challenge, the IB is recognised by leading universities across the world and equips students with the knowledge, skills and outlook to thrive in higher education and beyond.



IB STUDENTS COLLABORATE TOGETHER IN ANNUAL SCIENCE PROJECT

In July, all Year 1 IB students enjoyed an exhibition of scientific sensations, undertaken as part of their collaborative science projects. The project is designed to encourage students to work with curiosity, in order to create their own engaging and educational science project, prompted by an annual theme.

For 2026, the theme was 'circular economy' with the task to produce a piece of interactive media to educate other students and teachers about some weird and wonderful ways of reducing waste and continually reusing materials. Each group had students studying each of the four sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Environmental Science), which made their projects a convergence of all scientific disciplines and allowed members to contribute their own subject knowledge to discussions.

An extremely unforgettable project was the group who hosted their own television-style game show, in which they quizzed participants about various methods of reusing materials and their environmental impacts. All of the students loved taking part and letting their competitive spirits run wild!

Overall, the range and scope of these projects blew everyone away. From dramatic short films to intense board games, every group's ability to think outside of the box and express themselves so articulately was incredible to see. Everybody got the chance to socialise, enjoy themselves and meet people that they didn't know.

CREATIVE ARTS



SHOWCASE AND AWARDS

Varndean Sixth Form College recently hosted its annual Creative Arts Showcase, celebrating the exceptional talent and dedication of students across its diverse creative curriculum. The June event featured live, captivating performances from Dance and Drama students, alongside extensive exhibitions from Art, Textiles, Photography, Graphic Design, and 3D Design. The showcase also highlighted student innovation in digital and media landscapes, including Film Studies, Film Production, Media Studies, Music Production and Gaming.

Reflecting the high standard of work, the event included an awards ceremony honouring students whose resilience, commitment and discipline led to outcomes demonstrating creative innovation, technical skill, and artistic vision. The showcase stands as a testament to the vibrant creativity of the student body and the rigorous support provided by Varndean's Creative Arts faculty.

The success of this year's Showcase underscores the immense talent, passion, and dedication of our student body, effectively spotlighting the next generation of artistic innovators. Congratulations to all on an exceptional achievement.



THE WINNERS WERE:

Rufus Marsh Design Prize for 3D Design: **Pippa Beavers**

Emerging Textiles Artist Award: **Gina Granger**

Graphic Design Award: **Benny Ferrarese**

Aslan King & Nico Hicks Memorial Award for Fine Art: **Yara Perez Grossl & Izzie Scott**

Anne Howard Memorial Award: **Astrid Berman & Amelie Pepper**

Young Filmmaker Award: **Rosie Merat-Brandwood**

Best Media Products: **Ava carver & Ala Czyzykiewicz**

Best Short Film Award: **Alba Todd**

Game Developer of the Year: **Oliver Bint**

Music Technology Prize: **Caspar Irvine**

Sam Paterson Award for Drama and Performing Arts: **Libbie Dodds**

Distance Danced 2025: **Imogen Clarke & Tayla Murray**



STUDENTS' WORK EXHIBITED AT SIXTH FORM COLLEGES ASSOCIATION ART EXHIBITION

Congratulations to three of our talented creative arts students who were selected to have their work featured in this year's SFCA Art Exhibition in June.

Maisy Ball – Mumurations (3D), nominated by 3D Design tutor, Sarah Lampard-Sawyer
Bibi McGill – Monde Intérieur (Inner World) (Textiles), nominated by Textiles tutor, Helen Brewer
Sophie Willcox – Traincombined (Photography), nominated by Photography tutor, Richard Gaskill

This year's SFCA Arts Awards asked the next generation of talented young artists to reflect on borders, conflict, and connectedness through the theme of Artistes sans Frontières with the theme open to interpretation.

A fantastic achievement by the students – amazing work!





DRAMA SOCIETY'S MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

In June our Drama Society performed their excellent production of a Midsummer Night's Dream. For many of the Company, who joined the society as their enrichment opportunity, this was their first experience of performing on stage.

The students met for just an hour and a half each week, and worked around holidays and work experience placements to stage the full production in the equivalent of just two and a half days of professional rehearsal time. No mean feat!

Drama Tutor, Sian Hutchinson, said: "I have been immensely impressed by the commitment, discipline, kindness and professionalism shown by every student involved. The talent on display extends beyond the cast, with students contributing across all areas of the production. Special thanks go to Kit Longmore for composition, Orla McCully and Maja White for lighting and sound design, Jess Green Moran for costume making, and Emily Marsh for prop design, as well as my colleagues Steve Bates and Nicky Jones."

Congratulations to all involved!



FORMER STUDENT, FELIX PRESTON, WINS SOLENT AWARD

In April, former Varndean Sixth Form College student, Felix Preston, won first place in Solent University's Fine Art, Photography, Graphic Design and Illustration Competition. Felix's work, undertaken during his Foundation Art & Design course at Brighton Met, examined the life of his great-grandfather during the Second World War. The competition attracted more than 250 entries from further education students in Devon, Somerset, Hampshire, Sussex, London, and Kent.

Felix studied A Level Photography, Film Studies and Psychology at Varndean from 2023-2025. Well done Felix!

ROSIE WINS 'ONES TO WATCH' FILM AWARD

In June, Film Production and Film Studies student Rosie Merat Brandwood was named one of this year's Into Film Awards 'Ones to Watch' at a star-studded ceremony in London's Leicester Square!

Alongside fellow winners, Rosie's incredible achievements were celebrated on the iconic Piccadilly Lights – Europe's largest advertising screen.

The winners were joined by one of the film industry's most influential producers and Into Films Trustee, Barbara Broccoli (EON Productions), Into Film CEO Fiona Evans, and actor Jason Isaacs as they marked this special moment.

Barbara said: "I'm incredibly proud of this year's Into Film Awards Ones to Watch winners: Rosie from Brighton, Noah from Bristol and Araminta from Conway. It was so exciting for us all to celebrate their fantastic work today"

As part of the award, Rosie received a package of inspiring screen industry opportunities and a £1,000 cash prize to support her creative journey. After her short film 'The Freedom of the Sea' took home 'Best Documentary' at last year's awards, Rosie has continued to crush it on both the national and international film festival circuits. This nomination recognizes her incredible momentum and talent as a rising filmmaker. An outstanding achievement and a well-deserved recognition of Rosie's talent, hard work and passion for filmmaking.



VARNDEAN TEXTILES STUDENTS CHAMPION SUSTAINABLE FASHION



The creative work of five former A Level Textiles students (2026 leavers) – Pippa Beavers, Lucia Elfick, Ollie Greenham, Jasmine Hawkins and Bibi McGill – was recently showcased in the window of Emmaus on London Road, Brighton.

The eye-catching display celebrated the students' talent while promoting sustainability and slow fashion, encouraging the local community to rethink fast-fashion culture. The collaboration was a perfect fit with Sussex Emmaus, a charity supporting people who have experienced homelessness, while championing reuse and giving items a second life.

A fantastic opportunity to celebrate our talented students and the power of creativity to inspire a more sustainable future!

A LEVEL ART STUDENTS SELECTED FOR ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS YOUNG ARTISTS' SUMMER SHOW

A huge congratulations to A Level students Isobelle Scott and Ava Lawson on their incredible achievement of being selected for the Royal Academy of Arts Young Artists' Summer Show

Isobelle was selected for both the main exhibition at the RA in London from 14 July – 30 August, as well as the online exhibition. Ava was selected for the online exhibition.

We are extremely proud of their success, such a fantastic accomplishment! Massive congratulations from the Fine Art department!





PERFORMING ARTS STUDENTS IN 'THE THREEPENNY OPERA'

In April, Varndean Sixth Form College's second year BTEC Performing Arts (Acting) students took to the stage at the Ropetackle Arts Centre in Shoreham-by-Sea with a sell-out production of 'The Threepenny Opera'.

Playing to a packed house, this savage, stylish 1928 musical by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill exposes the hypocrisies of a society where morality is a luxury the poor cannot afford. This was a standout showcase for our students - theatre at its most revolutionary, a cynical, sexy, and spectacular look at a world where beggars and bankers blur into one.

Photography credit: Ryan Etheridge (former Varndean A Level Photography student)



SKILLS WEEK – STUDENTS GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY WITH GROWING SOILS



As part of their skills week in May, Varndean Sixth Form College students were lucky to have attended a session with Lisa Cornish of Growing Soils.

The Soil Food workshop allowed students to get hands-on experience making a compost extract to multiply protozoa and put microbial life back into the soil.

Lisa is passionate helping people to understand how their food is grown and how they can make a positive difference. The students enjoyed the session which highlighted the living system beneath the surface and how to work to produce healthier plants and soil.

EDUCATION & EARLY YEARS T LEVEL SUCCESS

We are very proud that all of our T Level Education & Early Years students who applied to higher education successfully received university offers to study Primary Teaching or Childhood Studies degrees. Among the achievements was a prestigious placement at Norland College, where one student was accepted to train as a Norland Nanny!

Students also demonstrated strong industry outcomes following their work placements. Two graduates secured roles directly from their placements—one as an Individual Needs Assistant at a local primary school and another as an Early Years Educator in a nursery. A third student accepted a full-time position at a local nursery. Congratulations to all!





RADICAL EMPLOYABILITY WORKSHOP

In June we were delighted to welcome Darius Norell and Nargis Jaffarali from People & Their Brilliance for an inspiring Radical Employability workshop.

65 students took part in the session, exploring their unique strengths, building confidence, and reflecting on what they can offer future employers. The engagement and enthusiasm shown throughout the workshop was fantastic to see.

A huge thank you to Darius and Nargis for delivering such a valuable experience, and well done to all our students for getting involved.

ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE VISIT STUDENTS

In May our Protective Services students were visited by the Royal Army Medical Service. James delivered an amazing interactive session where students received hands-on experience learning vital first aid skills including CPR and how to apply tourniquets, while also exploring the wide range of medical careers available in the army. A fantastic session full of practical activities, new skills and career inspiration!





POLITICS SOCIETY

Our Politics Society has had a busy and exciting start to the year. Earlier In September, we welcomed our first external speaker of the year - Bella Sankey, Labour Leader of Brighton and Hove City Council. Bella opened the packed session by sharing her personal journey into politics, outlining her background, career prior to council leadership, and her reasons for joining the Labour Party.

Following Bella's talk, the Q&A session covered a range of topics, including: tackling homelessness and improving transport links; analysing Andy Burnham's rise to becoming Prime Minister; and current foreign policy challenges.

Bella was impressed by the quality and thoughtfulness of the questions our students asked. Thank you to Bella and everyone who packed the room and made our first session such a success.

Later in October, we also were delighted to welcome James MacLeary, Lib Dem MP for Lewes, who spoke to students about his journey into politics and his role as the Lib Dem spokesperson for Defence, which has led him to be sanctioned by the Russian Federation. Students asked James a range of questions, including the challenges to the prison system and his views on the situation in Gaza. James has visited Politics Society several times now and students are always impressed by his approachability and willingness to answer their questions directly.

This was followed by a visit from Sara Birch, Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Brighton and campaigner for the Close Guantanamo campaign. Sara was supported by three Year 2 students who attended her session last year and have since become active in the Close Guantanamo campaign. We were fortunate enough to be joined for a live video conversation with Mansoor Adayfi who was held without charge in Guantanamo for 14 years and has since published a book about his experience. Many of the students present had little knowledge of Guantanamo Bay before the session and have signed up to support the campaign to release the remaining prisoners.

Later this term we are looking forward to further visits when we welcome Sarah Webster, Conservative Party candidate for Brighton Pavilion, Chris Callandar of Just for Kids Law, Peter Kyle MP and Sian Berry, MP.



STUDENTS TREK THE LAKE DISTRICT TO RAISE FUNDS FOR ROCKINGHORSE APPEAL

Congratulations to Varndean IB student Kip Douglas and 11 of his fellow students who undertook a 100km trek across the Lake District in the summer, in order to raise funds for the Rockinghorse Children's Charity.

After considering a range of options, they decided on a week-long hike across the Lake District National Park, covering around 100km from Penrith to Ravenglass.

Kip said: "We wanted to raise money for a local charity, where we could actually see the difference that our fundraising was making. And due to all of us growing up in Brighton we all have a history with the Royal Alex, we loved the idea of being able to support and give back."

The next task was to get people to join him, which was rather difficult because people weren't prepared for such a challenge. So, Kip put together a slideshow explaining how the hike could work, putting emphasis on the potential fun they could have and also on the fact that it would be a really meaningful challenge. The planning team were made up of six members, each with a designated area to organise, including transport to and from the Lake District, the meals and kit list, route planning, as well as accommodation.

The first day saw the group trek 13km to the shore of Ullswater, followed the second day by a 16km route that took them the length of the lake. Day three was their longest distance, with a 21km hike climbing two peaks and a couple of valleys to get to Great Langdale. The next day, the group climbed into the fells and walked past many mountain tarns before dropping into Wasdale. Day five was a well-earned rest day where they were able to dry their tents and clothes from the rainy day before, and re-stock supplies. Then their penultimate day saw them walking the longest, starting by summiting Scafell Pike and then descending into a mountain valley until they finally reached Eskdale at 9.00pm. Kip even dressed in a special horse outfit to get more donations!

The final leg was walking through the woods to Ravenglass station, and with a few hours to spare before their train, they managed to have a well-earned paddle in the sea.

Congratulations to everyone involved, you are an inspiration to us all.



UCL VISIT SOCIOLOGY STUDENTS

Varndean Sixth Form College's Sociology department welcomed researchers from University College London in June. Our students and staff were participants in Dr Jessica Ringrose and Annu Dey's current research exploring the impact of AI and chatbots on young people.

It was a fantastic experience for both students and staff to be part of such relevant and important research, and it gave students real insight into how sociologists carry out their research. We look forward to reading about the findings of their research.



STUDENT AMBASSADORS CAMPAIGN FOR ACCESS TO PLAY

In October, members of the Varndean Sixth Form College Student Ambassador Citizens Team joined with other young people from across the city to continue work on their latest campaign that centres around 'access to play'.

Hosted by the School of Progressive Futures at the University of Sussex, students met with leaders from Brighton and Hove Council, as well as key people from the NHS, to discuss collaboration and ways our communities can work together.

Aspire students from Varndean Sixth Form College were enthralled with their day at Oxford University in July. The 20 plus students are all applying to Oxbridge for a variety of degrees next year. They experienced dining in St John's, a tour of the college and were then involved in an academic taster session.

Humanities students considered images from original newspapers from the c19th reflecting on the nature of society. STEM students were in the lab using million-pound microscopes to analyse the materials used in a 1200bc bracelet. A huge thank you to Megan, outreach worker at St John's, who made this visit possible.

VARNDEAN STUDENTS ASPIRE AT OXFORD



IB STUDENTS VISIT PETER KYLE MP AT THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

In light of their huge success, our outgoing IB students spent a day meeting MP Peter Kyle in Parliament in September. The MP for Hove and Portslade was so impressed by their outstanding results, in particular Arun Webb achieving the maximum score of 45 out of 45, that he arranged for them to have a tour with him around the Houses of Parliament. Peter said: "I'm always aware that the young adults in Hove, Portslade and Hangleton will be (hopefully!) running the country in some form or another one day, so the sooner they get used to Westminster and how it operates the better in my book! Well done everyone."



EUROPEAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT UK NATIONAL FINAL

Eight of our incredible students headed to Newcastle in September for the European Youth Parliament UK (EYPUK) national final - Maya Klein, Harry Wright, Ellie King, Ottie Gibson, Omar Mohammed, Ned White, Elizabeth Clark and Albert Eldridge.

After qualifying at the regional round hosted at Bede's School earlier this year, the event was an intense few days of team building followed by working in committees to propose resolutions to pressing political problems.

The results were released in early October and we are very proud to announce that Harry Wright and Maya Klein have been selected to represent EYPUK at the 107th International Session of the European Youth Parliament in Porto, Portugal in September 2027. Many congratulations to them and all the students involved!

VARNDEAN SIXTH FORM COLLEGE BIOLOGY TUTOR CELEBRATES PEARSON TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2026

We are delighted to announce that Varndean Biology tutor, Yaso Shan, was awarded a Highly Commended FE Teacher of the Year 2026 Award by Pearson; the world's leading education provider. This is a national award in recognition of excellence and transformational teaching as well as the impact it has had on learners, colleagues and on the wider community.

Yaso said on receiving this accolade "I am very pleased to have been nominated and awarded for my work and contributions, not only in the promotion of STEM, but also the impact it has had on the wider college community. I went into teaching to share my love of the subject with the next generation of scientists and scholars. The focus for me has always been on teaching, learning and the student experience, finding new and interesting ways to impart my knowledge and expertise to engage young people to explore and discover science."

College Principal and CEO, Donna-Marie Janson said of this achievement:

"Congratulations to Yaso on this well-deserved national recognition. This Highly Commended award reflects her longstanding commitment to Biology education and to inspiring young people to develop a love of science.

During her time at Varndean, Yaso has made a significant contribution through her expert teaching, her passionate advocacy for STEM education, and the wide range of opportunities she has created for students beyond the classroom. From Clinical Case History Workshops for aspiring medics to leading the College's award-winning sustainability programme, she has consistently sought to broaden students' experiences and encourage them to engage with science in meaningful and practical ways.

It is wonderful to see her dedication to teaching, learning and student opportunity recognised nationally.

On behalf of everyone at Varndean Sixth Form College, I congratulate Yaso on this fantastic achievement."





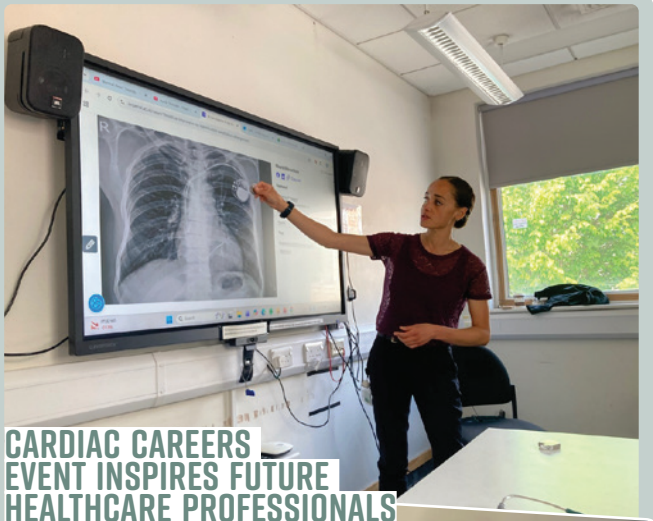
BIOLOGY TUTOR GIVES TALK ON AI IN 21ST CENTURY HEALTHCARE & BIOMEDICINE

On Thursday 23 April, Biology tutor Yaso Shan delivered a fascinating talk on the role of AI in 21st-century healthcare and biomedicine

Yaso explored the many benefits AI can bring to this area, from improved diagnosis and personalised treatment to enhanced research, greater efficiency, and increased accessibility.

She also took students and staff into a deeper dive looking at the wider implications of AI, including data privacy, big data, and the all-important doctor-patient relationship.

A huge thank you to Yaso for such a thought-provoking presentation!



CARDIAC CAREERS EVENT INSPIRES FUTURE HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

In May, during our annual Work Experience Week, MedVetDent students attended a Cardiac Careers event hosted by University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust at the Royal Sussex County Hospital. The event was organised by Emma-Jayne Hanner, MedVetDent Coordinator, and was attended by students interested in pursuing careers in Medicine, alongside learners from AAQ Medical Science, A-level Biology, BTEC Health and Social Care, and STEM Aspire with interests in healthcare careers such as radiography, clinical science, and cardiac nursing.

The event provided students with an engaging and inspiring insight into the world of cardiology and the wider healthcare profession. They experienced a series of sessions led by professionals from across the multidisciplinary healthcare team, including cardiology doctors, cardiology nurses, physiologists specialising in echocardiography, and radiography staff. Each session explored the speakers' individual career journeys, the challenges and achievements they had experienced within their professions, and included practical and interactive elements that helped bring the sessions to life.



One of the highlights of the morning was a session delivered by an F2 Doctor focusing on applying to Medical School. Students found this particularly valuable and reassuring, especially the discussion surrounding the many different pathways into Medicine. The event formed an outstanding enrichment opportunity within the College's MedVetDent provision, further enhancing students' understanding of careers within Medicine and the NHS more broadly.



BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026

In October we celebrated Black History Month 2026, and this year's theme, "Honouring Our Communities," allowed us to reflect on individuals whose everyday contributions shape and support Black life across the UK.

The national campaign highlighted 54 individuals from across Britain whose work spans education, healthcare, public service, culture, heritage, youth development, business, and social justice.

FOUNDATION YEAR CHARITY FAIR/SOCIAL ACTION WEEK

In March our Foundation Year students ran their Charity Fair/Social Action projects as part of their work experience. The fairs featured amazing bake sales, face-painting, jewellery sales and the chance to show off football skills! All money raised went to local charities including Amaze, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, Acorn, Alexander Rose Charity, African Centre for Development & Research, and the NHS Support Foundation among others.

Thank you to the students and staff who came along, and well done again our FY students - it was great to see confidence, teamwork, and positivity throughout.



MEDVETDENT STUDENTS SHINE AT OXFORD NATIONAL ETHICS FINAL



Following their outstanding success in this year's Practical Ethics and Responsibility Competition (PERC), three of our MedVetDent students travelled to the University of Oxford in March to compete in the national final hosted by the Uehiro Oxford Institute.

The prestigious national competition challenges students from Years 11-13 across the UK to explore complex ethical issues through both video submissions and live philosophical debate. After competing against dozens of schools nationally, our combined Year 1 and 2 MedVetDent finalist team earned their place at Oxford through an exceptional video entry examining the question: *"Should adolescents be allowed to make autonomous decisions about long-term psychiatric conditions?"*

The finalists – Immy Butler (Team Leader), Emily Crisp, Lila Crockett– represented the College superbly throughout the event, demonstrating outstanding critical thinking, teamwork, confidence, and intellectual maturity.

During their time in Oxford, students experienced university life first-hand whilst staying in halls of residence at St Hilda's College, meeting fellow competitors from across the UK, and even taking part in a ghost tour of Oxford. The experience provided students with an invaluable insight into student life at one of the world's leading universities, whilst also allowing them to build connections with like-minded students passionate about ethics, philosophy, medicine, and social responsibility.

The live final required students to engage in sophisticated philosophical debate across several challenging ethical topics. Teams debated the motions:

"Commercial surrogacy is wrong."

"Under-sixteens should be banned from using social media."

"The government should promote plant-based diets."

Our students performed exceptionally well throughout, holding their own against other very strong national finalist teams. Judges praised the team for the clarity and professionalism of their opening statements, the strength of their reasoning, and the quality of their oral presentation skills.

Particularly impressive was the team's contribution during the commercial surrogacy debate, where they explored whether consent can truly be meaningful when surrogacy may feel like "the only option" available to some individuals. Their consideration of alternative pathways, including adoption, created a nuanced and thought-provoking discussion that challenged opposing teams effectively.

Each student contributed confidently and effectively throughout the debates, consistently demonstrating high-quality communication, collaboration, and analytical skills. The team ultimately achieved Runner-Up position nationally – a phenomenal accomplishment against such strong competition.

In addition, Lila Crockett was awarded a medal for Best Speaker, recognising her exceptional debating ability, confidence, and clarity of communication throughout the competition.

The students were mentored throughout the competition by MedVetDent Coordinator Emma-Jayne Hanner. We are enormously proud of all of the students involved. Their curiosity, resilience, professionalism, and willingness to engage thoughtfully with complex ethical issues embody the ambition and collaborative spirit at the heart of our MedVetDent programme.

Congratulations to everyone involved on an outstanding achievement – they did themselves and the College incredibly proud!

YOUNG ORATOR OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

Congratulations to our Year 1 MedVetDent (ASPIRE) students who took part in Gresham College's Young Orator of the Year!

The annual competition challenges Year 12 students to communicate complex ideas in a clear, concise, and compelling five-minute recorded presentation providing an excellent opportunity to develop the confidence and communication skills that are so important for future university study and professional careers.

The competition encourages students to explore their chosen topic in greater depth, engage with the research of leading academics, and develop valuable presentation and oracy skills - all of which will support them with future UCAS applications, university interviews, and their progression towards challenging careers such as Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, and Dentistry.

Our participating students - Syeda Hasan, Viona Gashi, Yoanna Kim, and Veronika Zinakova - all members of the College's MedVetDent Programme with aspirations to study Medicine - were coached and supported by our Assistant Head of School, School Lead for Science, and MedVetDent Coordinator, Emma-Jayne Hanner.

The students thoroughly enjoyed the experience and each received a certificate recognising their participation and efforts! Well done to everyone who took part! It was wonderful to see our students challenging themselves, developing their confidence, and taking another positive step towards their future aspirations.



WELCOME TO OUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS!

A huge welcome to our new cohort of International Students, joining us from 18 different countries around the world!

They've already had a fantastic start, with a welcome day in September, enjoying a trip to Arundel, and getting to know their new friends and surroundings.

We're so pleased to have you all with us – here's to an amazing year at Varndean Sixth Form College!





OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS TO DISCOVER VARNDEAN

This term has seen us provide a huge range of events and opportunities for prospective students and their parents/carers.

On Saturday 3 October, we held our hugely successful Open Day, at which over 1000 prospective students discovered what an exceptional place Varndean Sixth Form College is to study at. Students and parents/carers were able to visit all curriculum areas to find out more about the courses we offer, as well as listen to a range of different talks.

The Marketing Team and senior teaching staff have participated in Post-16 Evenings and Careers Fairs at 23 different schools across Sussex where they have been able to meet and give advice to both Year 11 and Year 10 students.

The College's Vice Principal has delivered assembly talks to Year 11 students at 12 different schools.

For those wanting to find out more about an alternative to A Levels, we held our annual International Baccalaureate Diploma Evening, where attendees could hear an engaging and informative presentation from our IB Coordinator, together with current students talking first-hand about their experience studying the popular IB.

We are now looking forward to our Open Evening on Wednesday 4 November, from 4pm – 8pm!



YEAR 10 TASTER DAYS

In July, we welcomed around 1600 Year 10 students from secondary schools across Sussex to spend a day at college. Students were able to experience four exciting subject taster sessions of their choice, attend a general presentation in the hall, as well as acquire a taste for what is like to be a student here at Varndean.

A massive thank you to all our teachers and support staff who made the day run so successfully, and to the amazing students – it was fantastic to see you all.

Varndean Sixth Form College

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