

Newsletter



July 2026
Edition



CAREERS & HE FAIR 2026

Universities, employers and apprenticeship providers descended on Solihull Sixth Form College in June for the 2026 Careers & Higher Education Fair, offering Year 12 learners the opportunity to get a head start on their post-college plans.

In what is one of the biggest careers fairs in the region, exhibitors took over the Sports Hall and Studio, with more than 80 stands for learners to visit, including universities such as Aston, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Warwick. They were joined by employers such as British Airways, Barclays Bank and Jaguar Land Rover.

A programme of over 50 talks saw

visiting speakers come in to talk on a range of topics from Aerospace Engineering and Medicine to Criminology and Construction. Almost 1,500 bookings were made to attend careers talks, as Year 12 learners made the most of the opportunity to explore their post-College options.

Assistant Principal Trevor Irving, who is responsible for Careers at the College, commented: "This is a massive event to organise and I congratulate the Careers team for making it such a big success. It was a very hot day and we are very grateful to all the universities, training providers and employers for giving up their time to help our

young people. The event offered students the chance to meet with representatives from a huge range of further education and training providers all under one roof, so that they could be as informed as possible about their progression opportunities. This event is just the start, and we will continue to work with our young people as they move into Year 13 and decide on their future career path."

Many of these young people will be applying to university and they will be making their UCAS applications in the Autumn. Academic Coaching and Careers staff members will be supporting those learners to make the best applications they can.



AWARDS EVENING 2026

Solihull Sixth Form College celebrated student success in June at their annual Awards Evening at Renewal Solihull.

The College was honoured to host Deputy Lieutenant of the West Midlands Lieutenancy David Clarke and his wife Mrs Nicky Clarke at the event, as well as the Mayor of Solihull Councillor Sardul Singh Marwa MBE JP. They were present to offer their support to sixth formers, who were being recognised for their efforts and achievements in both academic and extra-curricular settings. Natalie Queiroz, Victims Advocate West Midlands Police & Crime Commission, handed out the prizes to learners and gave a moving speech at the end, in which she gave three pieces of advice to students, based on the challenges she has overcome.

Awards were given for each of the A level, BTEC or T level courses that the College offers. Teachers faced difficult choices, as they were

asked to select just two young people for recognition per subject. A range of young people were also honoured for extra-curricular achievements, including sporting success, exceptional progress and representation of Student Council. Shirley Lions were also in attendance at the event and handed out prizes for volunteering.

Five Outstanding Service awards

were also handed out to staff who are retiring this year. Michael Rennie (Business), Allison Sayer (Humanities) and Julie Watts (Social Sciences) were recognised for their service to the College. Joining them was Vice Principal Janice Hamilton, who has given 29 years of service to the College, and Maggie Allwood, who has worked in the kitchen at the College for 49 years.



YOUNG LEADER NOMINATION

An inspirational learner met with the College Principal recently to discuss his nomination for a Young Leaders Award.



Wafi Hanafee was put forward for the Young Leader of the Year award at the recent Inspirational Youth Awards, which recognise young people from across the UK who are making a positive impact within their communities. The awards, which took place at The Eastside Rooms in Birmingham in April, celebrate leadership, entrepreneurship, resilience, and social impact, highlighting young individuals who are driving meaningful change.

As well as a full-time A level student, Wafi is the CEO and Founder of RISE, a fast-growing student network focused on helping ambitious young people

grow personally and professionally through opportunities, networking, and development initiatives. RISE has reached over 20,000 students online and is consistently helping over 1,000 students through their online content, events, support and website resources.

Wafi commented: "The aim of RISE is to create an environment where ambitious young people can connect, raise their standards, and push themselves further. I believe the leadership, community-building, and impact created through RISE is what led to me being recognised and selected as a finalist for Young Leader of the Year."

VISUAL ARTS EXHIBITION 2026

Artists at Solihull Sixth Form College celebrated a year of hard work by showing their artwork at the 2026 Visual Arts Exhibition.

A private view took place in June with friends, family and staff invited to get a first look at the portfolios of work created for our A level and BTEC Art & Design courses. The artwork included paintings, drawings, sculpture, graphics, photography and fashion design pieces.

Curriculum Leader Zoe Maksymiw commented: "It took three weeks to hang the artwork for the exhibition and we are all delighted with how it has turned out. Our young people have worked incredibly hard this year and produced some fantastic pieces of artwork. I am so proud of them and our staff for their dedication and talent."

Awards were also handed out at the Exhibition, including a Star of the Department prize for the student who has shown the greatest overall attitude and commitment; that award went to Year 13 Photography student Emily Dallaway. Independent Learner prizes were also handed out for each course and these went to Paige Connor (Fine Art), Tasnime Arbi (Graphics & 3D Design), Jaimee Greaves (Photography) and Grace Quinton (BTEC Art &

Design Practice).

Each Visual Arts pathway is set a live brief project each year. This is to simulate what it is like to work in the Visual Arts industry, when practitioners are set a brief by a client and have to produce work to a strict deadline. For Fine Art, the live brief was set by Birmingham City University's Illustration department and learners had to create illustrated books. Kirsten Miles, Zara Faysal, Bahishta Ahmed-Atif and Cadey Heaven were given awards for their work in this project and Darcey O'Reilly and Katya Smirnova were highly commended. One student was also selected for the Royal Academy Youth Summer Show and that learner was Ellen Binder.

The live brief for the Graphics & 3D Design course was to create Chemistry Icons posters for the College's Chemistry department and the students given awards for this project were Sadie Lee, Hudhayfah Choudhary, Hedaya Ghadamsi and Alina Fatima. Meanwhile, Photography learners were asked to produce photographs for entry in the Sixth Form Colleges Association's annual Competition and three students were successful in getting their work selected; Tess Dennis, Orla McGarry and Flora Astbury.

Additionally, three photographers have had their artwork selected for the online Sixth Form Colleges Association Art Exhibition 2026.

The theme for this year's SFCA Art competition was Artistes sans Frontières, a reflection of the Médecins sans Frontières charity. The theme was open to interpretation, allowing sixth form students from across the UK freedom to represent that theme without constraint. A level Photography learners Flora Astbury, Orla McGarry and Tess

Dennis had their work selected to be part of the exhibition.

Flora's photographs portrayed the loss of creative freedom between childhood and adulthood. She photographed models in settings and poses that might challenge typical expectations of their age and used of mixed media elements, such as drawings and collage to emphasise the theme of creativity and make the images more visually interesting and colourful.



For Orla, her work explored the relationship between humans and nature, emphasizing its dominance, untouched power, and the idea that humans must adapt to nature rather than try to control it. She chose spaces such as caves, mountains and remote terrain because of the challenge they pose, forcing individuals to navigate the limits of the body and environment.

Meanwhile, Tess's artwork portrayed the bias women still face, particularly in the world of work. She communicated this visually by physically covering women with negative statements, expressing the ideas of how women are often negatively 'rubber stamped'.



KEELE VISIT FOR BUDDING MEDICS

Aspiring doctors visited Keele University recently for a day of activities aimed at showing them what Medical School study is like.

Learners on the Pre-Medical School enrichment undertook the trip, following a problem-based learning activity that took place in College back in March. During that session, students diagnosed an illness in a fictitious patient based on a series of clues provided to them. During the visit to Keele, learners reviewed what they had learned from that task.

While at the university Medical School, students also attended a lecture on active listening and interactions with patients and undertook a practical exercise that focussed on the urinary system and gave them the chance to utilise Keele's fantastic laboratories. There was also a session on Microbiology that asked students to consider the most appropriate antibiotics for a patient and students had the chance to ask lots of questions.

Assistant Principal Trevor Irving commented: "Our relationship with Keele University was established in 2014 and it keeps going from strength to strength. We are hugely grateful to Dr Andrew Morris, Dr Gordon Dent and Dr Rebecca MacKenzie for all the work that went into arranging their day for our young people. They thoroughly enjoyed their time at Keele and learned a lot, which will help them moving forward."



MODERN LANGUAGES AT WARWICK

Modern Language students visited the University of Warwick this term for a day of workshops that offered them the opportunity to try a new language.

Budding linguists on our A level French, German and Spanish courses enjoyed a very productive and useful day, attending three sessions, for which students registered their choices prior to the event. They all had a session on 'Studying Languages at University' and the different career paths that the degree can introduce, beyond the teaching or translation that learners typically progress onto. They also met current and ex-students who are presently working and all shared their experiences.

Of the sessions that students could choose from was one on Hispanic Studies, German Studies and European Studies, another was an Introduction to Arabic, Chinese,

Japanese and Russian, and a third focussed on Translation Studies, Italian Studies and French Studies.

Assistant Curriculum Leader Carolina Lopez-Garabito commented: "The staff, current and ex-students at the University

of Warwick were so welcoming to our young people and made this a fantastic day. Students enjoyed the opportunity to try a new language most of all and also picked up valuable insights into possible Higher Education options and careers."



GEOLOGY FIELDTRIPS

Geology students have been on two fieldtrips this term to boost their A level learning.

Year 13 learners visited Bradgate Park near Leicester to complete their final piece of fieldwork, while Year 12 learners enjoyed a trip to the Lapworth Museum of Geology at the University of Birmingham.

The fieldwork completed in Bradgate Park is an essential part of the A level specification. Located in the Charnwood Forest, the park has Precambrian (fossil bearing), Cambrian, Triassic and Quaternary rocks. Learners were able to view rocks dating back as much as 560 million years old. Meanwhile, at Lapworth Museum, students explored the many fascinating artefacts on display.

Geology teacher Adam Folbigg commented, "These two trips were a fantastic opportunity for our young people to get some hands-on experience to complement what they have learned in the classroom. Fieldwork is an essential part of the

A level course, as these practical assessments are required in order to achieve the practical endorsement for the qualification. They are also a lot of fun and can bring the topics to life for learners."



NEWCASTLE UNI CHEMISTRY SUPPORT

Both Year 12 and Year 13 Chemistry students benefitted from the expertise of an academic at Newcastle University this term.

Dr Peter Hoare from Newcastle University's STEM Outreach programme came into College to talk to Year 12 Chemistry students about research grade analytical infrared spectroscopy. The students learned how to produce and interpret spectra in order to identify unknown organic compounds.

Dr Hoare also ran a session for Year 13 Chemists, delivering the most up-to-date and impactful advice ahead of their A level exams. The lecture covered exam techniques

and how to gain maximum marks. There was also a tutorial on one of the tough organic analysis topics NMR.



SHIRLEY LIONS VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Our friends from Shirley Lions visited the College in April to hand out certificates for the volunteer work our learners have been doing.

Several students received Gold awards for 100+ hours of voluntary work, while one student completed more than 250 hours of service, which earned him a Platinum award.

Shirley Lions also joined us at the College Awards Evening to hand out some prizes too.



DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD

Students have been completing Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh expeditions this term.

Each trek has helped to develop students' skills, including in map reading, orienteering, teamwork and leadership.

Enjoy these photos of our learners on their expeditions.



TRANSLATION COMPETITION

A Modern Languages student has been commended the Midlands Regional Prize in the Anthea Bell Translation Competition this year.

Year 12 student Flora Astbury has received a commendation in the prestigious translation competition, which is run by Queen's College, University of Oxford. The competition presents learners with the opportunity to translate texts at four different age levels from French, Welsh, German, Spanish and Mandarin into English.

Flora is currently in her first year of studying A level German, French and Photography and worked in the German category of the competition. She translated an extract from a book called 'Jeder stirbt für sich allein' (1947) by Hans Fallada. The book follows a couple who tried to stay out of trouble under Nazi power before starting their own campaign of resistance against them. The short extract she translated was from the point of view of Anna, following

her husband Otto's plans to drop anonymous anti-Nazi messages across the city as an act of resistance.

Violet commented: "I plan on going to university to hopefully continue to study French and German at a higher level. I would like to be able to study and/or live abroad in the future, so my knowledge of languages from GCSE and A level will prepare me for this and allow me to experience other cultures."

BTEC BUSINESS CHARITY EVENTS

Aspiring entrepreneurs at Solihull Sixth Form College organised events as part of their BTEC Business course and raised more than £1,300 for charity in the process.

Learners were responsible for planning and delivering charity events at the end of the Spring term and have been encouraged to get creative as they raise money for Kids' Village, a charity which provides critically ill children and their families with the opportunity to experience free, magical breaks away from the stresses of hospital life. Kids' Village is the chosen charity of the Summit Learning Trust for 2025 and this £1,347.47 will help swell the coffers this year.

More than 20 events have taken place across campus, including bake sales, sweet stalls, sporting challenges and gaming tournaments. Learners got involved in the activities across break and lunchtimes to support their peers and help a good cause.

As well as considering the financial aspect of running an event, students have also been tasked with promoting it and completing risk assessments to ensure they have considered health and safety implications.

Applied Business Curriculum Leader Sandra Rowland commented: "These are the businessmen and women of the future and this unit

has got them thinking like that. They have realised just how much there is to think about when organising an event, including managing their costs to ensure it is profitable, considering health and safety and promoting the events. They have worked hard and their events have been a great success."



MAYORAL RECEPTION FOR STUDENTS

A group of students were invited to have tea with the Mayor of Solihull this term.

The Mayor of Solihull, Councillor Annette Mackenzie invited the learners who spoke at the College's Community Iftar to the Mayor's Parlour after being impressed by their public speaking. As well as discussing the Iftar and their post-College career and education plans, the Mayor also invited the students to try on her ceremonial mayoral robes and have the photographs taken in them.



MP VISIT TO CAMPUS



MP for Solihull West & Shirley Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst visited campus this term.

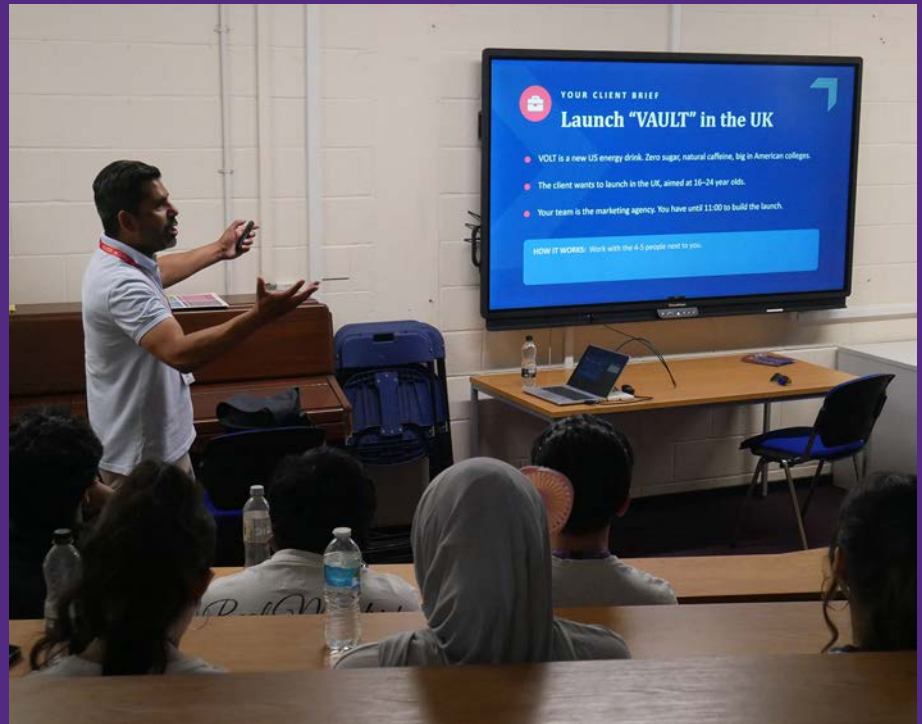
As well as a productive conversation with Principal Martin Sullivan about how he can support the College, he also met with students in Biology, Chemistry and Law and enjoyed a look around the campus.

MARKETING WORKSHOP FOR BUSINESS

BTEC Business students attended a workshop delivered by staff from University College Birmingham in June.

As well as learning about university life, the Year 12 learners completed a Marketing activity in which they were asked to come up with a marketing strategy to launch a new brand of energy drink. They were tasked with coming up with a name and their target market and thinking of exciting and innovative ways of ensuring that target market was reached.

The task was a valuable opportunity for students to see what the work of marketing entails and try their hand at a campaign of their own.



SUMMIT CONFERENCE 2026

Solihull Sixth Form College hosted the Summit Learning Trust's #WhatMatters Conference at the start of July.

Staff from across the Summit family were on campus for a day of seminars and workshops, aimed at developing knowledge and skills.

Among the renowned speakers at the end event was historian and Faithful" from hit TV series "The Traitors" David Olusoga.

Natalie Quieroz, Victims Advocate for the West Midlands Police & Crime Commission, was also



present to give a lecture on the challenges she has faced and how she has overcome them.

MAYORAL RECEPTION FOR STUDENTS

Year 13 students had the opportunity for one final fieldtrip before they leave college and move onto their next exciting challenge. One group of students

went to Alton Towers for a day of fun on the rides. Another group went to London, where they visited the National Portrait Gallery for the Marilyn Monrow exhibition. they

followed that with a visit to Covent Garden and enjoyed a theatre visit to see the musical Matilda.



STAFF ROUNDERS

Staff went head-to-head in a charity rounders match at the end of term. One team was captained by Assistant Principal Richard Hammond and the other by Assistant Principal Trevor Irving.

The match raised money for the College's Team Gambia volunteer project and it was great fun for all concerned too. Team Trevor came out on top with a 43-41 victory.



NETBALL CHAMPIONS

The 1st Netball Team at Solihull Sixth Form College is celebrating winning the AoC Sport Netball West Midlands Tier 2 League A title this season.

Captained by Lily Holtham, the girls have won eight of their ten matches this season to claim the title for the second year running. The team, which includes several players who were also part of last season's triumphant team, amassed more than 360 points on their way to the title. Highlights include a 46-31 win against second-placed Newcastle Stafford College.

Sport & Health Teacher and Netball Coach Sandra Rowland commented: "I'm proud of the girls for their dedication this season. Winning the title two years running requires consistency and hard work. We have some gifted players, including some who have been part of the team in both seasons, but the most impressive thing is the team-work and leadership they have shown. They deserve their success."

Sport & Health Curriculum Leader Lee Jones added: "I'm delighted to hear that the Netball 1st team have retained their league title. They have worked as a team all season long and been rewarded for their efforts. Congratulations to all involved."



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