



VIRTUS HERALD



Alcohol and it's effects: what students should know

Alcohol is something many people drink, but it can have both good and bad effects. It is important to understand how alcohol can affect your life and health.

Drinking alcohol can make people feel relaxed and happy, but too much can cause problems. It can make it harder to think clearly and make good decisions. For students, this might lead to missing school, getting lower grades, or having problems with friends or family.



Drinking too much alcohol can also harm your body. It can damage your liver, brain, and heart. Over time, it can cause serious health problems.

Some people feel pressured to drink because their friends do. But it is important to know you do not need alcohol to have fun. You can choose not to drink or have non-alcoholic drinks instead.

If you decide to drink, do it responsibly. Know your limits and take care of yourself. If you or someone you know has trouble with alcohol, don't be afraid to ask for help.

Let's make smart choices and take care of our health. Your future is more important than alcohol.



Volunteering matters at Virtus College!

In everyday student life, it's easy to get caught up in our own world: homework, exams, social events, and extracurricular activities. Yet, at Virtus College, we have an extraordinary tradition that reminds us of the broader community and the power of giving back.

At Virtus College, volunteering is embedded in our culture. By dedicating time to make *bocadillos* for those in need, we are reminded of the importance of compassion and the impact a single act of kindness can have. Each sandwich represents more than a meal, it symbolises hope, care, and a shared commitment to improving the lives of others.

Our *bocadillo*-making initiative is a shining example of how we can make a tangible difference in our community. Students come together, assembling sandwiches with love and care, knowing that these foods will provide comfort to someone facing difficult times. This project is not just about feeding the hungry; it's about building bridges and strengthening the bonds that hold our community together.



Volunteering is more than just helping others; it's about creating an effect of positivity that extends far beyond our initial actions. It teaches empathy, fosters a sense of community, and helps us develop critical life skills such as teamwork, leadership, and time management. When we step out of our comfort zones to assist others, we not only make a difference in their lives but also grow as individuals.

Participating in this initiative allows us to witness firsthand the realities of those less fortunate. It's a humbling experience that broadens our perspective and deepens our understanding of societal issues. It's also an opportunity to reflect on our own privileges and recognise the importance of using them to benefit others. Every small effort counts, and together, we can create a brighter future for all.

Volunteering is a powerful reminder that even the smallest actions can lead to significant change. At Virtus College, we are proud to be part of a community that values kindness, generosity, and the spirit of giving.

Let's continue making a difference!

Understanding Toxic Relationships and Red Flags

Relationships are a crucial part of our lives, shaping our emotional well-being and personal growth. While healthy relationships can bring joy, support, and stability, toxic relationships can have the opposite effect, leaving us feeling drained, anxious, and unworthy. As students, it's crucial to recognise the signs of toxic relationships early, understand their impact, and learn how to navigate away from them.

A toxic relationship is one where the dynamics between the individuals involved are unhealthy. These relationships are characterised by patterns of behaviour that are manipulative, controlling, or abusive, leading to emotional, psychological, or even physical harm.

Recognising red flags is the first step towards protecting yourself from toxic relationships.

Here are some common warning signs:

-Lack of communication.

-Control Issues.

-Isolation.

-Unpredictable Mood Swings



- Lying/ Dishonesty

-Lack of Trust

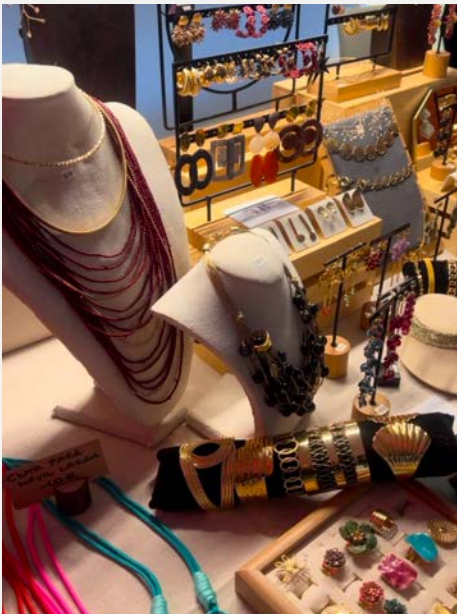
-Manipulation

-Excessive criticism

Toxic relationships can lead to a host of negative outcomes, including anxiety, depression, loss of self-esteem, and even physical health issues. They can also affect academic performance and social interactions.

Being aware of the signs of a toxic relationship is crucial for maintaining your mental and emotional health. By recognising red flags early and taking proactive steps, you can ensure that your relationships are healthy, supportive, and enriching. Remember, you deserve respect, kindness, and love in every relationship. Don't settle for anything less.

Christmas Fair!



Virtus College hosted a festive Christmas fair filled with holiday cheer. Visitors enjoyed a thrilling raffle with exciting prizes. Multiple stands offered a variety of shopping options, from handmade crafts to delicious treats. Guests found perfect Christmas gifts for their loved ones. The event was a joyful celebration of the holiday spirit.



By: Riana Parwani

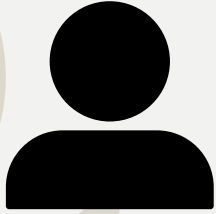
Year 13 University Offers and Dream Destinations

Carolina Zheng

In the UK she has applied to LSE, KCL, Bristol, Manchester and Durham, for which she has already received offers for the latter two.

In the USA she has applied to USC, NYU and Columbia University.

In the Netherlands she has been accepted into University of Amsterdam and University of Rotterdam.



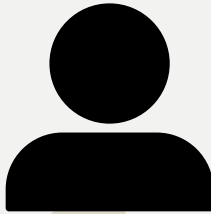
Gabriel Ezerzer

He has received offers from Warwick and Exeter.

He has applied to Durham, and Kings College London which is his dream University.

Leire Floristán

She has applied to University of Navarra and Francisco de Victoria and will also apply to Universidad Autónoma and Universidad Complutense de Madrid. All to study Medicine.



Elena Álvarez

She has applied and been accepted to CEU and CUNEF to study Law.

She is also applying to IE.

Camille Deschanel

She has applied to University of Nottingham, UCL, King's College London, Warwick University, Goldsmiths, University of Amsterdam and IE.

So far she has had offers for University of Nottingham and Goldsmiths.

Her dream University would be UCL and King's College

Congratulations to Nico Valderrama for getting an offer from Cambridge University! 🎉



Virtus in Sports

Laura Arroyo



Laura Arroyo discovered her love for basketball at the tender age of six, following a disappointing stint with football. Encouraged by a friend, she joined her former school's basketball team and quickly found her passion.

What motivates Laura? For her, basketball is more than a sport: it's an escape route from her day-to-day routine, a way to express herself, and a bridge to lasting friendships. "It's not just the game—it's the friendships I've built along the way. Realising I was good at something gave me confidence, changed my life, and brought true happiness. It's my passion, and I can see myself pursuing it in the future."

Balancing basketball and academics isn't always easy for Laura, who ambitiously trains with both her team and an upper-level squad (sub 22). "I try to finish my homework before training, but sometimes there's just too much," she admits. Fortunately, her teachers are understanding, often allowing her extensions when needed. Through her basketball journey, Laura has gained invaluable skills, including discipline, respect, and leadership. "I've learned to have a good vision of my surroundings and to help teammates when they're struggling—whether it's improving their game or keeping them on the right track."

On the court, Laura plays as a point guard and forward. When she's on the bench, she analyses the game, offering tips to her teammates on how to improve. "I also provide moral support when my teammates get frustrated," she says with a smile. Off the court, Laura shares strong friendships with her teammates, bonds that mean a lot to her. "They've become a big part of my life, even outside of basketball."

Laura's basketball journey hasn't been without its challenges. Early on, she faced frustrations with herself, her team, and even opposing players who targeted her because of her skill. "There wasn't much sportsmanship from other teams, and that was frustrating," she recalls. However, on the positive side this has led her to many anecdotes that make Laura believe karma exists. In 2024, Laura made a big move from first division to second, joining her current team El Valle de Las Tablas after some tough experiences with her former club. She started training in May and officially joined in September, ready for a fresh start.



By: Gabriela Andronis

House points

Watch out
Attenborough
and Seacole, your
points are going
down!

Austen



813 points

2nd Hawking- 599 points

3rd Attenborough- 365 points

4th Seacole- 330 points

The Secret Life of Teachers

Miss Marques!

Miss Marques, our vibrant and lively school secretary and Mrs Radford's PA, has lived a truly international life. Born in Portugal, she moved to East Belfast at the tender age of six. Her schooling was at Bloomfield Collegiate, an all-girls institution affectionately (and not-so-affectionately) nicknamed "B****field." For A-levels, she took Business, Spanish, and Geography in order to explore her love for languages and keep many doors open.

University brought Miss Marques to Northumbria in Newcastle, where she pursued a double honours degree in International Business Management with Spanish. Her time there was marked by equal parts academics and adventure, as she fondly remembers it as her "big party time." Despite her studies, she admits she didn't have a clear career path and, even now, doesn't desire a high-flying career. Her dream is simply to be rich and live on a beach....

Her journey to Virtus came about after a LinkedIn search and an expiring contract. At the time, she was working at the British Council in Spain but had reached the two-year maximum employment limit. Determined to stay in Spain, she found Virtus through LinkedIn and has been a cherished part of our team ever since.

Spain has been a significant chapter in her life. Initially, she was drawn here by her degree, which required a year abroad. In 2020, she and three of her best friends landed in Madrid. Despite the challenges of that year, she loved it so much that she returned after finishing university in the UK. Her connection to Spain has been strengthened by the friendships she made during her year abroad, giving her a sense of community upon her return. She also loves how close Madrid is to Portugal, allowing her to visit family on weekends.

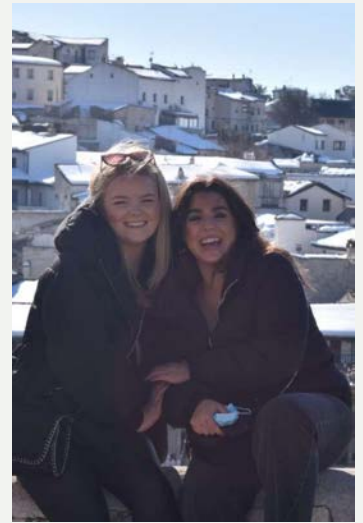
Miss Marques currently lives with her flatmate Taylor, with whom she shares what she jokingly calls an "old married couple dynamic" complete with playful bickering and teasing. Her first language is Portuguese, and her passion for languages led her to study Spanish, a decision influenced by her GCSEs and the doors it opened to living in different countries.

While she isn't sure if Madrid is her forever home, she knows for certain she's not going back to the UK. After moving so much, she's eager to see what's next, though for now, she's content to explore life in Spain. That said, she has some strong opinions. She openly admits she doesn't like Spanish food (a crime, some might say). Instead, she loves Brazilian barbecues with her family.

Miss Marques is a lover of karaoke, and she insists that karaoke loves her back. In fact, her passion for performing started in school, where she joined the fun choir, though she was hilariously rejected from the elite choir. While she would love to sing more, her karaoke mic, which she left with her roommate, mysteriously broke in her absence.

Her bucket list is as lively as her personality. She dreams of celebrating New Year's Eve in Rio de Janeiro, living in Australia, learning Italian, and visiting Hawaii. Despite all the places she's been to, each holding a special place in her heart, she's still searching for her favourite place on Earth.

When she's not working, Miss Marques loves reading (she ambitiously sets herself a goal of 100 books a year), attending music festivals, and going on girls' holidays. Her adventurous spirit and vibrant personality make her a joy to be around, and we're so lucky to have her here at Virtus!



By: Gabriela Andronis

Miss Vivero!



Miss Vivero, one of Virtus College's most dedicated and inspiring teachers, was born in Manila, Philippines, into a military family. Growing up in a military camp shaped much of her disciplined but close-knit childhood, where she cherished deep connections with her family, friends, and especially her siblings.

She followed the Philippine education system and excelled academically achieving an impressive 99% on the national exam, which gave her a wide range of university options. She eventually chose to study Secondary Education, majoring in Mathematics at University of Santo Tomas in Manila and followed by earning her master's degree in Mathematics Education.

Surprisingly, teaching wasn't always her first career choice. During high school, she was part of the Philippine Educational Theatre Association for two years, immersed in the world of performing arts. Inspired by one of her teachers, she initially considered studying architecture. However, while balancing her studies with theatre, she also spent time volunteering teaching for underprivileged children. This experience led her to realise her passion for education, aligning with the Asian cultural value of considering one's role in society. It was this realisation that guided her to decide education was the right path.

Her journey to Spain was what she fondly calls a "happy accident." Having spent most of her life in the Philippines, she moved to Bangkok in 2015 to teach at an international school. While living there, she came across an opportunity at Virtus College and soon found herself moving to Madrid, where she now plans to stay indefinitely.



Outside the classroom, Miss Vivero is a talented badminton player, competing in both women's doubles and mixed categories with her team being placed in third category in both. In addition, she also loves hiking and enjoys drawing in her spare time.

If she could teach any other subject other than mathematics, she would choose drama due to her strong background in theatre. Her passion for the arts runs in the family and was what inspired her to start.

When it comes to travel, Iceland is at the top of her list, especially to see its incredible volcanoes. Despite her adventurous spirit, her favorite place on Earth remains at home, surrounded by her family. She feels fulfilled, having achieved her goals and is now focused on embracing new experiences. While she sees herself retiring as a teacher, that moment is still far in the future.



At Virtus College, Miss Vivero is not just an exceptional teacher but also a source of warmth, enthusiasm, and inspiration. Her passion for teaching has definitely made a meaningful impact on her students' lives.

By: Gabriela Andronis

FUN SECTION

In this issue I decided to not do questionnaires to see who likes what best, but instead, involve the teachers. Here is guess the baby picture!



In case you didn't get them they are: Ms Sharoff, Ms Marques, Ms Birkenhead , Mr Picabea, Ms Martinez, Ms Vivero, Ms Zakaria, Ms Moreno and Ms McKee

By Cecilia Heras

Credits

We hope you enjoyed this issue of the Virtus Newspaper!

Every edition will be different and hopefully you can learn a thing or two from it.

Here is who is behind this project:

Jimena Gutiérrez- Editor

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Sophie Perez- Writer



***Special
thanks to:***

Laura Arroyo - Interviewee

Ms Vivero - Interviewee

Ms Marques - Interviewee

Ms Moreno - Moral support