PSYCHOLOGY

"Psychology, unlike chemistry, unlike algebra, unlike literature, is an owner's manual for your own mind. It's a guide to life. What could be more important than grounding young people in the scientific information that they need to live happy, healthy, productive lives? To have good relationships?" Daniel Goldstein

Current Teaching Staff:
Mrs M Wills - Head of Department
Miss L Needham

Examination board and syllabus: AQA

Entrance requirement: Grade 6 or above in GCSE Science.

Compulsory Content - Introductory Topics in Psychology
A topic from each of the main areas of Psychology will be covered:

Cognitive Psychology: Memory including models of memory, explanations for forgetting, eye-witness testimony and strategies to improve its reliability.

Developmental Psychology: Attachment – stages of attachment, multiple attachments and role of the father. Animal studies – Lorenz' geese & Harlow's monkeys. Explanations of attachment. Consequences of separation and deprivation and the effects of institutionalization. The influence of early attachment experience on childhood and adult relationships.

Biological Psychology: The structure and functions of the human nervous system including synaptic transmission. The structure and functions of the endocrine system - glands and hormones. Localisation of function in the brain. Biological rhythms.

Social Psychology: Social Influence including majority and minority influence, obedience to authority and independent behaviour. The role of social influence in the process of social change.

Clinical Psychology: Definitions in the field of mental health. Approaches to explaining and treating mental illness including biological and psychological and therapies. The behavioural, cognitive and emotional characteristics of OCD, phobias and depression.

Research Methods: Including experiments (laboratory and field), correlational analysis, observational techniques, questionnaires, interviews and case studies. Research design including sampling, pilot studies, hypotheses and variables, ethics, data handling and descriptive statistics, an introduction to statistical tests of significance.

Approaches in Psychology:

The behaviourist approach: classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning.

The cognitive approach: the study of internal mental processes, the role of schemata and the emergence of cognitive neuroscience.

The biological approach: the influence of genes, biological structures and neurochemicals on behaviour.

The psychodynamic approach: the role of the unconscious, the structure of personality - the id, ego and superego, defence mechanisms and psychosexual stages of development.

The humanistic approach: free will, self concept, self actualisation and the role of counselling psychology.

Issues and Debates in Psychology: Gender and culture - universality and bias. Free will and determinism - the scientific emphasis on causal explanations. The nature / nurture debate - the relative importance of heredity and environment in determining behaviour. Holism and reductionism - levels of explanation in Psychology. The ethical implications of research studies and theories in Psychology.

Optional Content
One option from the following 3 groups will be offered:

Option 1

- Relationships including the formation, maintenance and breakdown of romantic relationships, human reproductive behaviour and effects of early experience and culture on adult relationships. Virtual relationships in social media: self-disclosure in virtual relationships. Parasocial relationships: the absorption addiction model and the attachment theory explanation.
- Gender including psychological explanations of gender development (cognitive, social learning and psychodynamic), the role of chromosomes and hormones including atypical patterns resulting in intersex conditions. The influence of culture and media on gender roles. Atypical gender development and explanations for gender identity disorders such as transsexuality.

- Cognitive Development including Piaget's theory of cognitive development: schemas, assimilation, accommodation, equilibration, stages of intellectual development. and characteristics of these stages, including object permanence, conservation, egocentrism and class inclusion. Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development, including the zone of proximal development and scaffolding. Social cognition (theory of mind and perspective taking)

Option 2

- Schizophrenia - Classification of schizophrenia, positive and negative characteristics, reliability and validity of diagnosis. Biological explanations including the dopamine hypothesis and psychological explanations including family dysfunction. Treatments including drug therapies, cognitive behavioural therapies and family therapy.
- Eating Behaviour including attitudes to food, the evolution of food preference, dieting, role of neural and hormonal mechanisms in eating. The influence of culture on eating behaviour. Biological and psychological explanations for obesity and anorexia nervosa.
- Stress - The physiology of stress, including the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal system, the sympathomedullary pathway and the role of cortisol. The role of stress in illness, including immunosuppression and cardiovascular disorders. Sources of stress: life changes and daily hassles and workplace stress, individual differences in stress. Managing and coping with stress: drug therapy (benzodiazepines, beta blockers), stress inoculation therapy and biofeedback. The role of social support in coping with stress.

Option 3

- Aggression. Neural and hormonal mechanisms in aggression, including the roles of the limbic system, serotonin and testosterone. Genetic factors in aggression, including the MAOA gene. Evolutionary explanations of human aggression. Social psychological explanations of human aggression, including social learning theory as applied to human aggression, and de-individuation. Institutional aggression in the context of prisons: dispositional and situational explanations. Media influences on aggression, including the effects of computer games. The role of desensitisation, disinhibition and cognitive priming.
- Forensic Psychology. Offender profiling. Biological explanations of offending behaviour including genetics and neural explanations. Psychological explanations of offending behaviour including Eysenck's theory and psychodynamic explanations. Dealing with offending behaviour: the aims of custodial sentencing and its psychological effects. Recidivism. Behaviour modification in custody. Anger management and restorative justice programmes.
- Addiction Physical and psychological dependence, tolerance and withdrawal syndrome. Risk factors including genetic vulnerability, stress, personality, family influences and peers. Specific

explanations for nicotine addiction (brain neurochemistry and learning theory) and gambling addiction (learning theory and cognitive bias). Reducing addictive behaviour through drug therapy and behavioural interventions.

Number of Unit	% of A2	Coursework / Examination	Length of Time	What is assessed?
Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology	33.3%	Written examination. Multiple choice, short answer and extended writing	2 hours	Social Influence, Memory, Attachment and Psychopathology
Paper 2: Psychology in Context	33.3%	Written examination. Multiple choice, short answer and extended writing	2 hours	Approaches in Psychology, Biopsychology and Research Methods.
Paper 3: Issues and Options in Psychology	33.3%	Written examination. Multiple choice, short answer and extended writing	2 hours	Section A – Issues in Psychology Section B – Option 1 or 2 or 3

All classes are taught by specialist teachers across the entire two years. An eclectic variety of teaching methods are employed according to the demands of each topic.

A variety of learning strategies are employed including both teacher and student led presentations, designing, conducting and writing up class and individual investigations, class discussions and essay writing.

We give students comprehensive, tailored revision materials, sessions devoted to examination styles and regular examination practice questions.

CAREERS

Clinical Psychology, Educational Psychology, Forensic Psychology and Criminology, Psychiatric Nursing, Occupational Therapy, plus any career which involves working with people such as: teaching, social work, personnel, police, law, management, medicine, nursing, journalism, retail, etc.