

Psychology Statement of Curriculum Intent

It is our aim to inspire our students to develop a love of learning through an understanding and appreciation of the power of their own minds. The course syllabus provides the opportunity to learn about the complex structures of the brain, its influence on human behaviour both individually and within groups and the consequential impact of this behaviour in the wider world. It facilitates an awareness of the mental processes that enable a better understanding of how we think and feel.

Through the study of a broad range of topics such as psychological problems, social influence, criminal psychology and memory, our students develop an awareness, respect and understanding for others. For example, we explore how criminal behaviour impacts everyone either directly or indirectly. Students are invited to consider the causes of offending behaviour and how the many ways of dealing with this behaviour will have many moral, social and political implications.

Psychology lessons are planned so that students are challenged in class to consider alternative ideologies and concepts, and to develop a recognition and understanding of how cultural relativity and environmental influences such as our upbringing affect our experiences. We seek to present students with knowledge that informs them of the complexity of our species. It is our opinion that the insights our students gain about peoples' motivations, thought processes, perceptions and collective behaviour will give them a different perspective and appreciation about why people act in the ways they do so that they may understand their own and the lives of others more thoughtfully and reflectively.

There is a clear focus in the curriculum on skills such as how to carry out research and how to present a balanced argument. These are important skills that students will take forward in their further learning, family and employment. Studying Psychology opens up many future pathways for our students to build on the transferable skills they develop throughout this course such as mathematical skills, designing a scientific investigation, writing reports and evaluations, presentational skills, understanding psychological vocabulary, being analytical and developing their interpersonal skills through collaborative work.

Our students are introduced to a wide variety of viewpoints from some of the most influential Psychologists throughout history. We study the impact that their work has had on the world we live in and students are encouraged to make links between their studies and real life examples. They are expected to analyse the relative contributions of competing theories in order to discuss their impact on our understanding of human behaviour and society as a whole.

A key aim of the course is to encourage students to develop the higher level skills of evaluation, by looking at strengths and limitations of theories and studies as well as exploring core themes throughout the course such as the nature-nurture debate, reductionism versus holism and free will versus determinism. By comparing and contrasting various research methods and concepts, a more complex understanding of psychological issues is made possible and students are encouraged to challenge themselves, moving away from simplistic answers towards more developed discussions. During the course, students use their knowledge and evaluation skills to apply Psychology to real world examples of behaviour; a wide range of examples are used in lessons to support them with this.

As a team we have a strong commitment to raising the profile of mental health care and mental health awareness. Studying psychological problems gives us an opportunity to dispel myths about mental illness and provides a greater insight into the need to have informed discussions that include an exploration of the damage arising from discrimination, bias and stereotyping.

Throughout the curriculum we look at the many ways in which Psychology can be used to help people, including ourselves. We encourage the development of independence and resilience, offering opportunities for one-to-one support in addition to whole-class support in lessons and regular booster and revision sessions. This is in the context of expecting students to take responsibility for their own progress and outcomes.

Implementation

All Psychology teachers use a consistent approach to deliver high quality lessons, using a variety of resources and teaching strategies to ensure that students have a thorough knowledge of the specification. The key concepts, research methods, core themes and debates are integrated into all lessons to allow students to embed new concepts into existing knowledge. Students are encouraged to incorporate subject-specific terminology into their writing with the aid of key word lists provided for every topic and sitting regular psychological vocabulary tests.

Regular assessment is used to inform teaching and to make interventions where needed. Students are given personalised feedback to allow them to take responsibility for their own learning and teachers regularly review and adapt teaching approaches. The quality of teaching and learning in Psychology has been noted through lesson observations (where the engagement of students is evident), work scrutinies and learning walks.

We believe our curriculum extends beyond the course syllabus. Whilst we work hard to enable students to achieve the very best examination results, we consider that our curriculum to be valuable in more far-reaching ways than purely examinations. Students are constantly challenged to work collaboratively and think independently when engaging in lessons and class debates. We encourage our students to demonstrate positive behaviour, respect and tolerance in Psychology lessons. This is modelled by all teachers and supports students to express themselves in a confident manner. Lesson resources and materials are engaging and promote topical discussion and encourage students to develop enquiring minds.

Content is delivered to students and then built upon through a variety of practice questions, end of topic tests and regular quality feedback which is given to support student progress. Our curriculum design includes revisiting and building on existing knowledge. We ensure the level of challenge is high enough for the most able, with scaffold and support available for students who need it. We collaboratively use a variety of resources, teaching strategies and kinaesthetic tasks to ensure that students have a comprehensive knowledge of the specification and are capable of extending their knowledge beyond what is taught in lessons.

The number of students choosing to study Psychology are high and a number of our students go on to study the subject further at college.