Psychology Department – Curriculum Intent- Spring 2026

Overview of KS5 Curriculum				
Subject: A Level Psychology		**Head of Department:** Mrs B Dooley		
	Year 12		**Year 13**	
	Teacher A	**Teacher B**	**Teacher A**	**Teacher B**
Autumn Term	**Paper 2 Induction to Psychology** **B**rief history of psychology and which key subjects influenced its development as a separate scientific discipline. **Introduction to study skills:** assessment objectives and how to 'unpack' exam questions by recognising key command words. **Paper1-Introductory topics in psychology:** Social Influence-why do individuals conform/obey? What social/dispositional factors influence this? How do minorities influence the majority and cause social change? Role of ethics in conducting research into human behaviour. Link to Research methods-with a focus on the experimental method and its ethics. **Career Links:** **Behavioural Scientist-** Paper 1 **Attachment** -how and why do attachments form (evolutionary & environmental explanations) and what happens if they do not form? Links to adult development and criminality. Animal studies of attachment-links to RM-ethics. How psychologists measure attachment and how attachment types vary cross-culturally.	**Paper 2 Scientific processes** Aims: stating aims, the difference between aims and hypotheses. - Hypotheses: directional and non-directional. - Variables: manipulation and control of variables, including independent, dependent, extraneous, confounding; operationalisation of variables - Control: random allocation and counterbalancing, randomisation and standardisation - Demand characteristics and investigator effects. - Experimental designs: repeated measures, independent groups, matched pairs. - Experimental method. Types of experiment, laboratory and field experiments; natural and quasi-experiments. - Sampling: the difference between population and sample; sampling techniques including random, systematic, stratified, opportunity and volunteer; implications of sampling techniques, including bias and generalisation. - Ethics, including the role of the British Psychological Society's code of ethics; ethical issues in the design and conduct of psychological studies; dealing with ethical issues in research - Pilot studies and the aims of piloting.	**Paper 3: Introduction to Forensic Psychology** - Offender profiling examines the difference between the British and American approaches apply to key case studies. - Explanations of criminality such as biological and psychological examined. - Functions of custodial sentencing and the psychological treatments available to criminals explored. - L**ink to the wider debates:** freewill vs determinism, nature-nurture, reductionism vs holism. **Career Links:** Forensic Psychologist, Forensic Psychiatrist **- Gender Development**-the role of chromosomes and hormones in biological sex, -with a focus on atypical sex chromosome patterns. Gender identities, including non-binary and gender fluid. - Explanations of gender development examined (biological, cognitive, Psychodynamic, SLT) - The influence of culture and media on gender roles discussed. - Gender incongruence such as gender dysphoria explained from several different perspectives.	- Reliability across all methods of investigation. Ways of assessing reliability: test-retest and inter-observer; improving reliability. - Types of validity across all methods of investigation: face validity, concurrent validity, ecological validity and temporal validity. Assessment of validity. Improving validity. - Features of science: objectivity and the empirical method; replicability and falsifiability; theory construction and hypothesis testing; paradigms and paradigm shifts. - Reporting psychological investigations. Sections of a scientific report: abstract, introduction, method, results, discussion and referencing. **Data handling and analysis** - Quantitative and qualitative data; the distinction between qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. - Primary and secondary data, including meta-analysis. - Descriptive statistics: measures of central tendency – mean, median, mode; calculation of mean, median and mode; measures of dispersion; range and standard deviation; calculation of range; calculation of percentages; positive, negative and zero correlations.

Psychology Department – Curriculum Intent- Spring 2026

	Embed the use of the Peel method to develop A03 skills. **Career Links:** Clinical Psychologists, child psychologist	- Observational techniques. Types of observation: naturalistic and controlled observation; covert and overt observation; participant and non-participant observation - Observational design: behavioural categories; event sampling; time sampling. - Self-report techniques. Questionnaires: interviews, structured and unstructured. - Questionnaire construction, including use of open and closed questions; design of interviews. - Correlations. Analysis of the relationship between co-variables. The difference between correlations and experiments - Data handling and analysis - Quantitative and qualitative data; the distinction between qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. - Primary and secondary data, including meta-analysis. - Descriptive statistics: measures of central tendency – mean, median, mode; calculation of mean, median and mode; measures of dispersion; range and standard deviation; calculation of range; calculation of percentages; positive, negative and zero correlations. - Presentation and display of quantitative data: graphs, tables, scattergrams, bar charts. - Distributions: normal and skewed distributions; characteristics of normal and skewed distributions. - Introduction to statistical testing; the sign test. When to use the sign test, calculation of the sign test.	**Career Links:** Clinical Psychology, Psychiatrist, Endocrinologist	- Presentation and display of quantitative data: graphs, tables, scattergrams, bar charts, histograms. - Distributions: normal and skewed distributions; characteristics of normal and skewed distributions. - Analysis and interpretation of correlation, including correlation coefficients. - Levels of measurement: nominal, ordinal and interval. - Content analysis and coding. Thematic analysis. **Inferential testing** - Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of inferential testing and be familiar with the use of inferential tests. - Introduction to statistical testing; the sign test. When to use the sign test, calculation of the sign test. - Probability and significance: use of statistical tables and critical values in interpretation of significance; Type I and Type II errors. - Factors affecting the choice of statistical test, including level of measurement and experimental design. When to use the following tests: Spearman's Rho, Pearson's R, Wilcoxon, Mann-Whitney, related T-Test, unrelated T-Test and Chi-Squared test. - This is taught after RM due to it being the compulsory part of paper 3 and the students should now have A03 knowledge to help push their marks to a higher level using these issues and debates.

Psychology Department – Curriculum Intent- Spring 2026

		Career Links: Statistician, Research psychologist		
Spring Term	**Paper 2-Psychology in Context** Key Approaches - Explore a range of key psychological perspectives ranging from Biological, Freudian, Cognitive to environmental ones. Compare the 6 psychological approaches in terms of their views on key areas of psychology. **Career Links:** Counselling, CBT Therapist, Clinical Psychologist	**Paper 1 Memory** - The multi-store model of memory: sensory register, short-term memory and long-term memory. Features of each store: coding, capacity and duration. - The working memory model: central executive, phonological loop, visuo-spatial sketchpad and episodic buffer. Features of the model: coding and capacity. - Explanations for forgetting proactive and retroactive interference and retrieval failure due to absence of cues. - Factors affecting the accuracy of eyewitness testimony: misleading information, including leading questions and post-event discussion; anxiety. - Improving the accuracy of eyewitness testimony, including the use of the cognitive interview. **Career Links:** Neuroscience/neuropsychologist Police, Teaching	**Paper 3-Stress & Stress Management** - The physiology of stress, including general adaptation syndrome, the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal system, the sympathomedullary pathway and the role of cortisol. - The role of stress in illness, including reference to immunosuppression and cardiovascular disorders. - Sources of stress: life changes and daily hassles. Workplace stress, including the effects of workload and control. - Measuring stress: self-report scales (Social Readjustment Ratings Scale and Hassles and Uplifts Scale) and physiological measures, including skin conductance response. - Individual differences in stress: personality types A, B and C and associated behaviours; hardiness, including commitment, challenge and control. - Managing and coping with stress: drug therapy (benzodiazepines, beta blockers), stress inoculation therapy and biofeedback. - Gender differences in coping with stress. The role of social support in coping with stress; types of social support, including instrumental, emotional and esteem support. **Career Links:** Occupational Psychologist, Medical Doctor	**Issues and debates in Psychology** - Gender and culture in Psychology – universality and bias. Gender bias including androcentrism and alpha and beta bias; cultural bias, including ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. - Free will and determinism: hard determinism and soft determinism; biological, environmental and psychic determinism. The scientific emphasis on causal explanations. - The nature-nurture debate: the relative importance of heredity and environment in determining behaviour; the interactionist approach. - Holism and reductionism: levels of explanation in Psychology. Biological reductionism and environmental (stimulus-response) reductionism. - Idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation. - social sensitivity in psychological research **Career Links:** Research Psychologist

Psychology Department – Curriculum Intent- Spring 2026

Summer Term	**Paper 2-Psychology in Context** - Bio-Psychology-how does our physiology control our behaviour? - The divisions of the nervous system: central and peripheral (somatic and autonomic). - The structure and function of sensory, relay and motor neurons. The process of synaptic transmission, including reference to neurotransmitters, excitation and inhibition. - The function of the endocrine system: glands and hormones. - The fight or flight response including the role of adrenaline. - Localisation of function in the brain and hemispheric lateralisation: motor, somatosensory, visual, auditory and language centres; Broca's and Wernicke's areas, split brain research. Plasticity and functional recovery of the brain after trauma. - Ways of studying the brain: scanning techniques, including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI); electroencephalogram (EEGs) and event-related potentials (ERPs); post-mortem examinations. **Career Links:** Neuropsychologist, Neurosurgery-Brain Surgeon, Medical Doctor	**Clinical Psychology & Mental Health** - Definitions in the field of mental health, including deviation from social norms, failure to function adequately, statistical infrequency and deviation from ideal mental health. - The behavioural, emotional and cognitive characteristics of phobias, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). - The behavioural approach to explaining and treating phobias: the two-process model, including classical and operant conditioning; systematic desensitisation, including relaxation and use of hierarchy; flooding. - The cognitive approach to explaining and treating depression: *Beck's negative triad and Ellis's ABC model*; cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), including challenging irrational thoughts. - The biological approach to explaining and treating OCD: genetic and neural explanations; drug therapy. **Career Links:** Clinical Therapist, Counselling Psychologist, CBT Therapist, GP	**Revision -** Delivery of course content will be dependent on students' areas of strengths and misconceptions. This will be determined by individual teacher assessment.	**Revision -** Delivery of course content will be dependent on students' areas of strengths and misconceptions. This will be determined by individual teacher assessment.

Curriculum Rationale:

Our curriculum is built around the AQA specification. This is the market leader for A level Psychology, therefore there are lots of resources available and interactive websites for students. Additionally, all teachers in the department are Examiners on different papers for AQA so they can use their experience to support students further.

Psychology Department – Curriculum Intent- Spring 2026

The Psychology department strives to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of Psychology, fostering both self-awareness and insight into others. Students will explore how psychological concepts explain everyday social phenomena and learn how psychological research is conducted, including the role of the scientific method and data analysis. Additionally, the curriculum introduces students to a range of psychological fields, such as Forensic Psychology, to prepare them for higher-level studies.

In Year 12 the teaching is split evenly between Teacher A and B. Students start with a brief introduction to the history of psychology as most students are new to the subject. The first topic is Social Influence. This topic draws on students' everyday experiences with conformity and obedience, encouraging group discussions and building confidence early in the course.

Teacher B begins with the Research Methods topic because this underpins all psychological topics and students can be questioned about methodology in all topic areas. Memory is a method-heavy topic, making it ideal for applying knowledge of research methods to a practical area of psychology.

Teacher A teaches the topic Attachment -Students are often familiar with this topic, which facilitates discussion and further builds confidence. It also introduces **Learning Theory**, which prepares students for **Key Approaches** studied in the Spring term. As the year progresses Teacher, A progresses onto the topic of Key Approaches - this introduces the key psychological perspectives which enables students to apply them to future topics such as: Psychopathology, Forensic Psychology and Gender Development.

Teacher B teaches Clinical Psychology which enables students to apply their knowledge of the key Psychological Perspectives (being taught simultaneously) to the topic area. Additionally, it reinforces the key concepts and therapies associated with each approach.

In the summer term students' progress onto Biopsychology. This is a challenging topic especially for non-biology students, so needs to be sequenced carefully. It requires lots of reinforcing, so at this stage of the year there is more scope to do this.

In Year 13 students have a larger proportion of lessons with teacher A. who focuses on Forensic Psychology. This is an interesting topic which is great to engage all students at the start of the year. Also, it reinforces the key approaches and some of the therapies taught during the delivery of psychopathology. Teacher A then progresses onto Gender Development. As this topic also explores gender development from several different psychological perspectives, it makes sense to teach it following Forensics. The final topic for Teacher A is Stress & Stress Management. The first part of this unit-physiological response to stress- a great opportunity to recap the fight/flight response taught at the end of year 12.

Teacher B starts with a recap of Year 12 Research Methods. This topic is developed further at A2 level and is tackled early in the course as it is worth 25 % of the whole A level and helps with the mathematical content. Teacher B then moves on to teach some Issues and Debates in Psychology (teacher A teaches the rest). This is a compulsory part of Paper 3, and the students should now have A03 knowledge to help push their marks into a higher level using these issues and debates. This compliments Teacher A's focus on Forensics and Gender as for students to access level 4 on the mark scheme, their discussion must be 'thorough' 'so they must refer to wider debates (nature-nurture etc).

Finally, we revise in lessons once the specification is covered. We also run prep' session to support students with Year 12 revision and Aim Higher for students aiming for A*/A grades.

The Psychology curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that topics build on one another, reinforce core concepts, and gradually develop students' confidence and expertise. From foundational knowledge in Year 12 to advanced, engaging topics in Year 13, the sequencing ensures that students acquire a deep and interconnected understanding of Psychology while preparing for further study.