Psychology Curriculum Overview

This overview document details what students will be studying in this subject area over the course of their time with us and the skills and knowledge they will be covering. Students will be formally assessed across the year and their progress and ATL (Attitude to Learning) will be reported home at the end of each term. Assessments will aim to assess the knowledge and skills a student has covered up to that point in their education, including the curriculum covered in the previous year/s.

Half term	02.09.25 - 23.10.25	03.11.25 - 19.12.25	05.01.26 - 13.02.26	23.02.26 - 26.03.26	13.04.26 - 22.05.26	01.06.26 - 17.07.26
	Autumn 1 - 8 weeks	Autumn 2 - 7 weeks	Spring 1 - 6 weeks	Spring 2 - 5 weeks	Summer 1 - 5 weeks	Summer 2 - 7 weeks
Year 10	***Introduction to Psychology*** During this half term, students will have an introduction to Psychology and start the exam content. The first topic that will be covered is Memory. ***Memory*** Students will begin by exploring how memory works, including how information is encoded, stored, and retrieved. You'll learn about the different types of memory stores (like short-term and long-term), and how models such as the multi-store model and working memory model explain memory processes. You'll also examine how memory can be influenced and distorted by things like leading questions and context, and how memory is not always a perfect record of the past.	***Sensation and Perception*** In the second topic, you'll discover the difference between sensation (raw data from the senses) and perception (how your brain interprets that data). You'll learn about depth cues, illusions, and how visual tricks can show the brain's role in perception. Two major theories—Gregory's and Gibson's—offer different views on how we perceive the world. You'll also study how factors like motivation, emotion, and culture can change what we see.	***Thinking and Understanding*** This topic focuses on how thinking and understanding develop from infancy to adolescence. You'll study key theories from Piaget about stages of cognitive development and how these relate to real-life learning. Concepts like egocentrism and conservation show how children's thinking	***Research Methods*** Over the next two half terms, students will be focusing on the topic of research methods. In this topic, students are introduced to how psychological studies are planned and conducted. They learn about different types of experiments, variables, and ways to collect data (like observations or questionnaires). The chapter also covers how to choose a sample, deal with ethical issues, and analyse results using tables, charts, and simple statistics. It encourages critical thinking by looking at how reliable and valid studies are.		***How People affect Us*** This topic looks at how other people can affect our actions, beliefs, and decisions. Students explore why people conform or obey authority figures, using key studies such as those by Asch and Milgram. The topic also explains helping behaviour and crowd behaviour, including what makes people more or less likely to help in emergencies. Psychological theories are applied to real-world events, including bullying, peer pressure, and social change.

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Year 11	***The relationship between thought and language*** At the start of year11, students pick back up from where they left off in year 10 with chapter 6. Students study the relationship between thought and language, and how we communicate without words. Theories by Piaget and the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis help explain how thinking and language develop. The topic also explores facial expressions, gestures, posture, and eye contact, looking at how these vary across cultures. Students also compare human communication to animals, highlighting key differences in complexity and purpose.	***Brain and Neuropsychology*** This topic explores the structure and function of the brain and nervous system. Students learn how the brain controls behaviour and how damage to specific areas can affect personality or memory, using case studies like Phineas Gage. They also study lateralisation (how the left and right hemispheres differ), Hebb's theory of learning, and modern methods used to study the brain. It connects biology to psychological functions like learning, memory, and emotion.		***Mental Health*** The final topic focuses on mental health, looking at how conditions like depression and addiction are diagnosed, explained, and treated. Students explore both biological and psychological explanations for these disorders, including genetic factors and faulty thinking patterns. Treatments such as antidepressants and CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) are compared. The topic also looks at the rising rates of mental illness and the wider impact on society.	***Revision and Exams***	***Exams***

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Year 12	*Year 12 encompasses both paper 1 and paper 2 topics. In the autumn term, both Approaches to psychology and social influence are covered.* ***Social influence (paper 1)*** explores how people's behaviour, thoughts, and beliefs are influenced by others. It includes conformity (e.g. Asch's studies), obedience (e.g. Milgram), and explanations for resistance to social influence. Students also examine the role of social change and minority influence in shaping society, using both theory and real-world examples. ***Approaches (paper 2)*** provides an overview of the major psychological approaches: behaviourism, cognitive, biological, psychodynamic, humanistic, and the emergence of psychology as a science. Each approach is compared based on its assumptions, methods, and applications. Students learn how different approaches interpret human behaviour. ***Memory and Research Methods*** Students learn about different types of memory (e.g. sensory, short-term, and long-term), the multi-store and working memory models, and how memory is affected by interference, retrieval failure, and misleading information. The topic also includes research into eyewitness testimony and the use of cognitive interviews to improve accuracy. This chapter equips students with the skills to design, carry out, and evaluate psychological research. Topics include types of experiments, observational techniques, questionnaires, sampling methods, and ethical issues. Students also learn about statistical analysis, the use of graphs and tables, and how to interpret and report findings scientifically.		*Over the next term, we cover three topics. Biopsychology lasts the full spring term. We also cover attachment and psychology in each half term.* ***Biopsychology*** Biopsychology focuses on the biological basis of behaviour, including the structure and function of the nervous system, the endocrine system, and the brain. It also covers brain plasticity, localisation of function, and the body's responses to stress (fight or flight). Students examine methods used to study the brain and biological rhythms such as circadian cycles. ***Attachment*** Attachment looks at how bonds between infants and caregivers are formed, including stages of attachment and the importance of animal studies. Students explore theories of attachment (Bowlby, learning theory), types of attachment (Ainsworth), and how early relationships influence later development. The effects of deprivation, privation, and institutionalisation are also studied.	***Psychopathology*** Psychopathology covers definitions of abnormality and explanations for common disorders like phobias, depression, and OCD. Students compare behavioural, cognitive, and biological approaches to explaining and treating these conditions, such as CBT and drug therapy, while evaluating their effectiveness.	***Research Methods*** *In the final term, research methods are covered as a stand alone topic. The depth and breadth of the topic needs a full term to cover the required range of skills, such as maths and statistics.* *This chapter equips students with the skills to design, carry out, and evaluate psychological research. Topics include types of experiments, observational techniques, questionnaires, sampling methods, and ethical issues. Students also learn about statistical analysis, the use of graphs and tables, and how to interpret and report findings scientifically.*	

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13	*Students study Issues and Debates in Psychology (3.3.1) alongside Schizophrenia (3.3.5), developing a critical and evaluative understanding of how psychological knowledge is constructed, explained and applied.* ***Issues and Debates in Psychology*** Within Issues and Debates, students explore key theoretical discussions including gender and cultural bias, examining concepts such as androcentrism, alpha and beta bias, ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. They analyse the debate between free will and determinism, including biological, environmental and psychic determinism, and consider the scientific emphasis on causal explanations. Students also evaluate the nature-nurture debate, holism and reductionism, idiographic and nomothetic approaches, and the issue of social sensitivity in psychological research. ***Schizophrenia*** Alongside this, students examine Schizophrenia as a case study of psychological explanation and treatment. They develop an understanding of positive and negative symptoms, issues in diagnosis such as co-morbidity, gender and cultural bias, and symptom overlap. The curriculum explores biological explanations including	In this half term students study Aggression (3.3.8) alongside Inferential Testing (3.2.3.3), developing a secure understanding of both theoretical explanations of aggressive behaviour and the statistical methods used to analyse psychological research. ***Aggression*** Within the Aggression topic, students explore biological explanations, including neural and hormonal mechanisms such as the limbic system, serotonin and testosterone, as well as genetic factors including the MAOA gene. They examine evolutionary and ethological explanations, focusing on innate releasing mechanisms and fixed action patterns, alongside social psychological explanations such as the frustration-aggression hypothesis, social learning theory and de-individuation. The topic also addresses contemporary issues including institutional aggression in prisons, media influences on aggression, and the role of desensitisation, disinhibition and cognitive priming. ***Inferential Testing*** Alongside this, students develop competence in inferential statistical testing, building the skills required to interpret and evaluate psychological research. They are introduced to the purpose of statistical testing and learn how to calculate and interpret the sign test,	***Inferential Testing and Aggression*** During Half Term 3, students in AQA A-level Psychology will complete their study of Inferential Testing (3.2.3.3) and Aggression (3.3.8), consolidating both methodological skills and theoretical understanding in preparation for assessment. Students will finalise their understanding of inferential statistical tests, including selecting and interpreting appropriate tests, alongside evaluating biological, evolutionary and social psychological explanations of aggression and applying these to contemporary issues such as institutional and media-related aggression. ***Relationships*** Following this, students will begin Relationships (3.3.2), exploring key psychological explanations of attraction, formation and breakdown of romantic relationships. Learning focuses on factors affecting attraction, including self-disclosure, physical attractiveness and the matching hypothesis, as well as filter theory. Students examine theories of romantic relationships such as social exchange theory, equity theory and Rusbult's investment model, alongside Duck's phase model of relationship breakdown. The topic also considers modern relationship contexts, including online relationships and parasocial relationships, evaluating the impact of technology, absence of gating, and media influence on	***Relationships*** During Half Term 4, students will complete their study of Relationships (3.3.2), consolidating their understanding of attraction, romantic relationship theories, relationship breakdown, and contemporary relationship types such as online and parasocial relationships. Emphasis is placed on applying psychological theories to real-world contexts and developing evaluative skills through exam-style questions. ***Revision*** Alongside the completion of this topic, students will begin structured revision for all three examination papers. Revision activities focus on consolidating key knowledge, identifying and addressing gaps in understanding, and strengthening exam technique across Papers 1, 2 and 3. Students will engage in retrieval practice, synoptic links between topics, and extended response practice to build confidence and readiness for final assessment. This half term supports the transition from content delivery to exam preparation, ensuring students develop a secure, integrated understanding of the specification and are well prepared for the demands of AQA A-level Psychology.	***Revision*** During Half Term 5, students will focus on intensive revision and final preparation as they come to the end of the AQA A-level Psychology course. Teaching centres on consolidating knowledge across all three examination papers, with targeted revision designed to address individual gaps, strengthen synoptic understanding, and refine exam technique. Students will engage in retrieval practice, timed exam questions, and focused feedback to build confidence and ensure readiness for final assessments.	***Exams***

	genetics and the dopamine hypothesis, as well as psychological explanations such as family dysfunction and cognitive approaches. Students also evaluate treatments, including drug therapies, cognitive behavioural therapy and family therapy, and consider the importance of interactionist explanations through the diathesis–stress model. Throughout these topics, students build the ability to apply debates to research and real-world issues, compare approaches, evaluate evidence, and construct well-developed exam responses. This integrated study strengthens synoptic understanding across the specification and prepares students effectively for A-level assessment.	including probability, significance levels, and the use of critical values. Students examine factors influencing the choice of statistical test, such as level of measurement and experimental design, and learn when to apply a range of tests including Spearman's rho, Pearson's r, Wilcoxon, Mann–Whitney, related and unrelated t-tests, and the Chi-Squared test. Key concepts such as Type I and Type II errors are embedded to support accurate interpretation of findings. Throughout these topics, students strengthen their ability to apply theory, analyse research evidence and evaluate explanations, while developing the mathematical and methodological skills required for success in A-level Psychology. This integrated approach supports confident exam performance and prepares students for the demands of Paper 3 assessment.	relationship formation and maintenance. Throughout the half term, students continue to develop application, analysis and evaluation skills, linking research methods to theory and building confidence in extended exam responses. This sequencing supports cumulative learning and prepares students effectively for the demands of Paper 3.			