

The Quality of Education: Psychology - Purpose and Provision



St Christopher's:
A Church of England Academy

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither-
whatever they do prospers.

Psalms 1:3

The Purpose of Study

The purpose of the Psychology department at St. Christopher's Sixth Form is to offer students an engaging and stimulating course to discover insights into the reasons behind human behaviour, helping them to gain not only a better understanding of others around them, but of themselves too. The Psychology curriculum will enable our students to value the importance of psychological research and will promote a curiosity of human behaviour and the mind, equipping them with the necessary scientific knowledge, skills and vocabulary to develop a better understanding of human behaviour. We do this using quality teaching which ensures students understand underlying psychological principles and can apply them in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts. We want students to be able to think analytically and reach logical conclusions based on scientific evidence.

The course is designed to:

- Develop essential knowledge and understanding of different areas of psychology and how they relate to each other
- Develop and demonstrate a deep appreciation of the skills, knowledge and understanding of scientific methods
- Develop competence and confidence in a variety of practical, mathematical and problem-solving skills
- Develop their interest in and enthusiasm for the subject, including developing an interest in further study and careers associated with the subject
- Understand how society makes decisions about scientific issues and how the sciences contribute to the success of the economy and society

Lesson materials are engaging to promote topical discussion and encourage students to develop an enquiring mind. As a knowledge-based curriculum, we believe that knowledge underpins and enables the application of skills. Content is delivered to students and then built upon through a variety of practice questions, with regular quality feedback being given to support student progress. The knowledge acquired then allows students to develop their analytical and critical thinking skills.

The Psychology course focuses on:

- Introductory Topics: the study of Memory, Social influence, Psychopathology and Attachment.
- Psychology in Context:
 - Different perspectives to the study of human behaviour (biological psychology, behaviourism, social learning theory, cognitive psychology, psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives)
 - Biopsychology (the influence that our genetics, neurology and physiology have on behaviour)
 - Research Methods in Psychology
- Issues and Topics:
 - Issues and Debates (gender and cultural bias, free will and determinism, holism and reductionism, nature and nurture, idiographic and nomothetic)
 - Cognition & Development, Stress, and Forensic psychology
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Complementing the School Purpose

Foundation Scripture

Psalms 1 is directly referring to knowing the LORD as the source of life (cf. Jeremiah 9v23-24), as the source of living water, and that it is only in true relationship with Him that we can be like that plant that flourishes, bearing the fruit of the Spirit in good times and under trial – all fruit that is not of temporary value but of eternal treasure.

The Psychology department seeks to honour the image of God in each student. The material creation was made by God to be developed, cultivated, and cared for in an endless number of ways through human work. As teachers of Psychology whenever we draw out the potential of the students to help them flourish, we are following God's pattern of creative cultural development. This applies to the endeavours of both students and staff in respects of academic development and performance, as well as the personal development of students. Furthermore, the gospel reminds us that God himself intervened to heal the brokenness, and this compels us to contribute to that progress in the Psychology Department through our support both pastorally and academically with all our students. We often need outside help (from God or friends or mentors or opportunities), and so we aim to identify potential barriers to our students' success and provide interventions to help them overcome those challenges.

Key Themes

Our curriculum in Psychology supports the ethos statement of the school. The contents and structure of the curriculum provide opportunities for students to better understand (i) their relationship with themselves through gaining insight into their own behaviours, (ii) their relationship to others so that they can learn how to live well in society, and (iii) gain wisdom and understanding to enable them to make effective decisions and choices about their own behaviour and its impact.

Knowing what it is to be fully alive

Studying A-level Psychology helps to increase a student's self-awareness of their own thinking and behaviour through studying behaviours through a variety of topics, such as psychopathology, stress and memory. By increasing a student's understanding of themselves in these areas it enables them to change and alter their behaviour. The knowledge gained from studying Psychology has the potential for students to have a better understanding of mental health (abnormality, depression, OCD, phobias), society (conformity, obedience, social change), and a grasp of how the mind works in relation to memory which can directly impact their academic performance.

Learning how to live well together

In relation to the above, Psychology increases a student's understanding of others. Through learning about human behaviour, students can better understand and interpret the behaviour of others, offering explanations that go beyond the surface level, and consider a wider range of factors. This has the potential to help a student move beyond stereotypes and prejudices they may come across. In particular, cultural and gender bias is considered in depth. Furthermore, much of the Psychology course considers treatments for a range of behaviours (e.g. stress, OCD, criminal behaviour) which encourages students to be outward looking in society for how they can help others.

Securing wisdom and understanding

From a basis of having an improved understanding of themselves and others, students are better equipped to make wiser decisions in life. This can be through something as profound as the knowledge of attachment in relation to the impact motherhood can have on the long-term development of a child, to using their knowledge of human behaviour to change their behaviour in such a way to impact others for good. Additionally, Psychology is based on scientific principles, and as such trains students to be critical thinkers, drawing conclusions based on the available evidence.

Christian Virtues

Throughout A-level course, various topics engage students in key Christian virtues. For example, hope is clearly on display in the various ways that psychological research can be applied to benefit the lives of people. This can be through treatment methods for mental health issues, to helping people manage stress, to understanding differing ways of dealing with offending such as restorative justice. In relation to friendship, much of Psychology considers the influence that others can have on our behaviour, whether that been through conformity and obedience, or through the key role that social support can play in managing stress. In essence, Psychology draws attention to the impact our behaviour can have, for good and bad, upon others and as result can provide insight for students to behave in ways to build and maintain friendships. Furthermore, the virtue of love overflows in the many attempts of psychology to improve the lives of others through application of insights gathered from research evidence. This can very powerfully be seen in the significant area of attachment and the role of the caregiver for the long-term development of children.

Curriculum Aims

Offer a meaningful encounter with Jesus, the Christian faith and practice in a way which is life enhancing

As a Sixth Form that provides for students of all faiths, Psychology helps to engage students in critical thinking so that they can learn the skills needed to thoughtfully consider and form conclusions about their own beliefs and others. Psychology considers the biases that we can all hold and can be blind to, and through shining a light on such ways of thinking it can potentially help students to evaluate ideas, beliefs, and competing theories so that they can have a more reasoned set of beliefs.

Provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and achieve

For the Psychology department the implementation of the A-level curriculum is carefully designed to cultivate within the students the key skills of critical analysis, independent study, application of knowledge to real world scenarios, and research methodology. The course material has been carefully crafted and refined so that students are provided with and set tasks to discover the essential information. Our students need to be connected to the accurate sources for them to achieve, and the expertise of the teachers following their years of exam marking and developing CPD ensures the high-quality source for student success. This is maintained through departmental meetings where good practice is shared, including lesson ideas and resources, work scrutiny, and assessment moderation. The most recent Departmental Review for Psychology rated us Outstanding in our provision.

The Psychology Department aims to identify potential barriers to our students' success and provide interventions to help them overcome those challenges. This is the implementation of the VESPA principles in the department, where intervention is focused along these strands.

As a Psychology Department our intervention and support process involve:

- **Online Textbook and Revision materials:** The psychology has department again subscribed to online materials that will further enhance student access to resources and materials to improve their learning. Each student will have their own personal login that gives them access to online textbooks for the course as well as additionally material to develop and assess their understanding.
- **Intervention and Support:** one-to-one intervention and support sessions are run on a regular basis. Some of these sessions will be revision focused, assessment focused, or skills based.
- **Student mentoring:** further support to students through U6 students working with both L6 and U6 students. This ranges from help with organisation to essay writing.

Promote the moral, cultural, mental and physical development of all pupils

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. In addition to our aims, our curriculum purpose 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.

Prepare pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life

Through an understanding of their own behaviour, and that of others, studying Psychology for our students has the potential to equip and inspire our students in adult life. This could be directly through shaping the way they parent their own children (through studying attachment), to choosing a career that directly works with those suffering from mental health issues, to going further with the knowledge of child development to, for example, train as a Speech and Language therapist. Studying Psychology develops a range of valuable skills including critical analysis, independent thinking and research, as well as a deeper understanding of the dynamics of human interaction and communication. This comes through a range of opportunities and responsibilities that occur in the classroom through group tasks, and individual projects as well as wider curricular opportunities such as: conducting research investigations, completing an independent psychology study project, role of Psychology Ambassador, trips to events. As a result, Psychology helps prepare our students for adult life.

Complementing the School Provision

Teaching Approaches

Key to the teaching of A-level Psychology are the six principles from 'Making Every Lesson Count'.

1. Challenge - *the provision of difficult work that causes pupils to think deeply and engage in healthy struggle.*

In lesson students are working towards the objectives based on the exam specification. This sets a high standard for all students to achieve, and whilst some may need more support and guidance, the end point is the same. These expectations include the quality of their organisation, the level of detail of the completed workbooks, the acting on feedback, and the regular completion of revision materials throughout the year. In order to encourage these expectations high quality of work from students is shared, and regular reviews of student folders as part of work scrutiny are conducted.

2. Explanation – *the skill of conveying new concepts and ideas. Explanations should be tethered to something pupils already know about; explanations should allow for the limited capacity of the human memory to hold on to a number of new items at once; explanations should aim to transform abstract ideas into concrete ones.*

As teachers of the specific topic of Memory, we are aware of the need for explanation to take into account Working Memory and so make explanations that connect to prior learning but not in a way that overloads. Activities used to explain different topics often use different examples and stories, as well as videos, to help illustrate more difficult abstract concepts. Many concepts for students, particularly in Biopsychology, can be difficult for them to understand, and as a result, evaluation of this material becomes even harder. This is why we explicitly talk about this upfront and emphasise the importance of effective strategies to consolidate this terminology. We take the time in places to explain the etymology of a word, and use mini active recall tasks in lessons to provide opportunities for long term retention of these concepts to lighten the cognitive load later on.

3. Modelling – *'walking' students through problems and procedures, and in doing so sharing thought processes which pupils will then apply themselves.*

The nature of the Psychology course lends itself to explicit discussion about cognitive processes and the science behind how the mind works. Consequently, discussion of meta-cognition with the students is on show, with the modelling of how to ask questions to think critically about content, and ways of linking ideas together. Live modelling often happens with essay writing construction, and the development of evaluative paragraphs, most notable in effectively linking evaluative points to the question at hand. Regular use of exemplar material is shared with students, whether this is from a suitable essay produced from the class, or from a previous student. These are photocopied and shared with students, or more explicit tasks are used with images of the paragraphs on Ppt. Of particular emphasis in developing writing skills for our students is the focus on the way students verbally answer questions in class as they often go together – "if you can say it, you can write it."

4. Practice – *the need to do something many times in order to achieve independence. This is deliberate practice with the guidance of a teacher*

This happens in a number of different ways that develop and progress throughout the course as students have more knowledge and a better understanding of the expectations we have for work. For example, at the beginning of a new A-level subject, there is naturally dependence on teacher explanation for new concepts, evaluative skills particularly in the area of Research Methods and Issues and Debates. Early on students are given more explicit teaching and opportunities to apply straight away (i.e. in the Approaches topic). This evaluative knowledge then becomes less structured as we study new topics in order to encourage students to actively recall the earlier content thus strengthening their long term memory connections. In their booklets evaluative points are structured and more formally written for them, and then reduced as the year progresses. This also applies to Research Methods practical's, and the teaching of essay writing.

5. Feedback – *we as teachers need to show pupils what they need to aim for, set them off and then keep them on track through feedback, before letting them know that they have got there.*

Following formative assessments D.I.R.T marking is employed with Symbol marking that allows for individual improvement tasks for work. Often in day to day lessons the teacher will provide verbal feedback directly to students during work and activities. With essay writing, students self-assess their evaluative paragraphs by highlighting/identifying the component parts. This immediately gives them feedback as to the structure of what they have written, and gives them the opportunity to make improvements there and then.

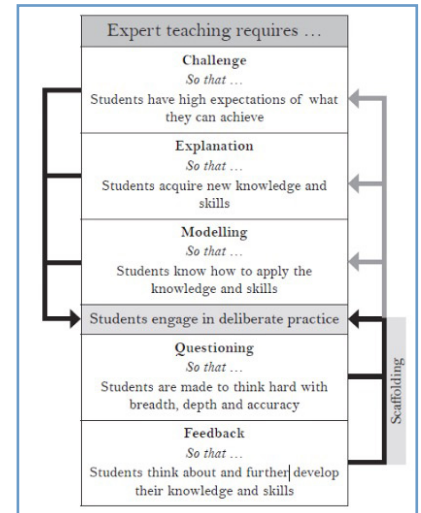
6. Questioning – *promotes deeper understanding and allows for the testing of misconceptions.*

Questioning techniques are employed that are based on the levels of Socratic questioning:

- Getting pupils to think; challenging and probing pupils' assumptions; demanding evidence; looking at alternative viewpoints and perspectives; exploring implications and consequences; questioning the question.

Additionally, the material of A-level Psychology lends itself to a range of other Teaching Approaches:

- **Research Methods Practicals:** these are specifically topic designed investigations that progress in line with the students understanding of Research Methods. They allow students to apply their understanding of a topic and specifically their Research Methods skills in real research. It is crucial as part of the A-level for the students to have as much experience as possible of conducting research. This is why for each topic there is a Research Methods Practical.



Pupil attitudes

Pupil attitudes are promoted and encouraged firstly through high expectations in the classroom and in the quality of the work completed, but most importantly through the supportive culture with the teacher. This includes teacher's positively encouraging the resilience and growth mindset needed for students to achieve, and showing them the effective study strategies needed for them to succeed. Some ways this is facilitated include additional Study Support sessions outside of class time and mentoring with U6 Psychology Ambassador students.

To inspire and promote a deeper interest in students to engage them in the subject, aspirational trips and talks are held with former students now studying Psychology at a higher level, as well as strong links with Lancaster University's Psychology department. One of the inherent features of Psychology is that relatability and clear application of the content to the student's everyday lives and by showing them the impact it can make to their understanding of themselves and others can help foster student attitudes. The Psychology Ambassador role is also an opportunity for students to further engage in the subject and share their passion for Psychology with others. When younger prospective students can see the enjoyment they have for Psychology it helps instil in them an anticipation to study the subject should they start with us in the Sixth Form.

In terms of assessments, the importance placed on actively learning from feedback in order to improve work further helps to develop student attitudes so that they can see where they are at and how to make progress next time. Finally, at the end of the academic year we gather feedback from students about their experiences of the course, topics they liked, teaching methods they enjoyed, and we use this to improve our teaching methods to improve student attitudes.

Going beyond the Exam Specification

In addition to items mentioned above such as the involvement with Lancaster University with projects, events, and seminars, one way that we encourage the students to go beyond the exam specification is with the Psychology Independent Project. This requires students to read a range of articles, listen to podcasts, read a book, and watch a film which are all Psychology related and write a short reflection on each one. This helps to foster an interest in the subject beyond the course and opens up resources and areas of interest that students would encounter in the course. Beyond this, OneDrive resources contain an array of independent learning opportunities such as articles and research journals.

Extra-curricular and enrichment

Extra-curricular opportunities cover a range of areas. Firstly, we make the most of links with local universities and events organised, including Manchester university, UCLAN lectures on forensic psychology, and direct links with Lancaster University already mentioned above.

Regularly throughout the year books, films and podcasts are regularly referred to and students encouraged to explore.

As part of UCAS applications, subject specific advice is provided for those students applying for a Psychology based degree.

Whole school/cross-curricular elements

Psychology is a multi-disciplinary subject and as such relates to a number of subjects:

- Ability to communicate persuasively in written form using critical consideration of research evidence
- Statistical analysis and an understanding of the scientific process
- Scientific understanding of the biological processes underpinning and influencing human behaviour, including the impact that biological treatments such as medication can have on the impact of human behaviour

To help encourage and develop reading with our A-level Psychology students the following is done:

- Use of articles during class activities – extended reading tasks with questions
- Homework tasks that require use of online textbook/online webpages
- Psychology Independent Learning Project – articles and book to read
- Other student work – essays as exemplars that students read, assess and annotate

Meeting the needs of all

In order to do our best to meet the needs of all students in Psychology:

- All students have access to the same materials: workbooks, online textbook, books, articles etc.
- Study Support sessions outside classroom time provided
- Clear guidance and support with effective study strategies and revision
- Ambassador mentoring
- Ambassador role for aspiring students
- Extension activities and higher-level activities for aspiring students
- In connection with Access Arrangements, access support in assessments is provided, with additional technology use where required, as well as the adaptation of teaching materials (printing/colour) and seating arrangements for students.

Ad Gloriam Dei

To the Glory of God



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