

Curriculum Statement – Psychology

Key message /Intent of the Psychology curriculum at English Martyrs School Voluntary Academy

Psychology matters because it connects the young person to all aspects of life from birth to bereavement. In other words psychology is life and life is psychology. Psychology students are emboldened to develop knowledge to enable the application of skills valued in life e.g. critical analysis, independence, practical, mathematical, how to solve problems etc. Ultimately, psychology aims to foster not just a superficial appreciation of these areas but one that is deep, competent and confidently applied. Therefore, a good psychology student would be an individual from a cross section of KS4. They would exhibit these knowledge areas and would show interest in and enthusiasm for the subject including relevant careers. The curriculum focuses on a holistic approach to ultimately develop the young person. It is the total learning experience that matters with the aim of developing resilient and responsible young people. Moreover, the curriculum in psychology nurtures knowledge of memory enhancing techniques through the study of human memory. This knowledge can help in all areas of life e.g. by making them aware of the limitations of working memory, how we can use memory improvement mnemonics such as dual coding etc. Fundamentally, the curriculum in psychology aims to inspire, build on existing knowledge and skills, develop deep learning and prepare them for the world of work. All students are supported in an equitable education with teaching having high expectations of all.

Why does the Psychology Department follow the AQA specification?

AQA has been chosen because students will study relevant content and acquire relevant knowledge. The qualifications offer an engaging and effective introduction to psychology. Students will learn the fundamentals of the subject and develop skills valued by Higher Education (HE) and employers, including critical analysis, independent thinking and research. AQA been chosen because it offers progression. It appeals to a cross-section of students, regardless of whether they have studied the subject before. It builds on skills developed in the sciences and humanities, and enables progression into a wide range of other subjects. AQA has been chosen because it aims to develop knowledge and inspire.

How does the Psychology Department implement the curriculum?

Teaching in psychology aims to give every child the chance to be excellent through encouraging the development of a growth mind set. It uses language which promotes challenge as something which is positive in all. Teaching involves strong subject knowledge leading to a greater impact on students' learning e.g. by helping to identify and correct misconceptions. Therefore, the quality of instruction is important which is demonstrated through effective questioning –e.g. acknowledging correct answers, identifying incorrect answers swiftly, prompting, giving shy pupils chance to answer questions etc. Teaching involves providing challenge and having high expectations of all students all of the time irrespective of their starting points so they experience a productive struggle. Therefore, adapting teaching is a priority i.e. providing focused support for pupils who are not making progress rather than differentiating by task. In other words, students are given the same task yet teacher responses are different allowing all to reach and go beyond expectation. Teaching involves explanation in psychology. Teachers actively present materials e.g. asking questions and giving feedback. High quality teacher talk is a feature of psychology lessons to promote excellence and growth. This involves both anchoring to what students already know, and acknowledging Cognitive Load theory. STM/Working memory has limited capacity and so teaching is in small chunks being careful not to overload STM e.g. students not doing two visual or two auditory tasks at the same time . Therefore, new ideas are introduced in small manageable increments. Indeed teaching in psychology follows a research led approach. Explanation involves elaboration i.e. students describing and explaining something learned to others. Questions that require connections between ideas are used. Explanation also involves group activities / paired work, which is clearly structured, so every student has a clear and distinct role and it is carefully sequenced. Teaching in psychology also involves modelling of worked examples e.g. of essays. This is accompanied by good questioning and feedback. It also involves frequent opportunities to practise new material. Spaced practice i.e. knowledge is rehearsed for short periods over a longer period of time.

Interleaving i.e. mixing practise of topics e.g. Memory, Attachment, Social Influence, Memory, Attachment etc. And retrieval practice i.e. students are encouraged to recall something they have learned in the past and bring it back to mind e.g. through regular short answer quizzing at the start of lessons. Students are encouraged to explain why a fact is true (elaboration question).

A sequential approach

The curriculum in psychology builds on knowledge and skills developed in KS3 and 4 particularly in the area of the natural sciences (e.g. the basic scientific method), mathematics (e.g. percentages), English (e.g. essay writing) and Humanities (e.g. history of the Holocaust). In terms of the curriculum in Year 12 and 13, topics are covered in a certain order to provide a holistic experience i.e. for students to discover the bigger picture of how different areas of psychology fit together to explain real life events.

In Year 12, research methods are taught first to provide the opportunity to develop critical analysis, practical, mathematical and problem –solving skills. Skills evident in lower Key Stages. Inferential analysis and distributions are taught which are not delivered at KS4. Human memory is next as it delivers career options e.g. in the Criminal Justice System as well as an opportunity to cover knowledge that can improve memory e.g. capacity of STM and mnemonic strategies such as organisation and imagery. Human attachments are next as again the curriculum develops interest and enthusiasm for sensitive topics such as maternal deprivation. Finishing with the combination of Approaches and Clinical Psychology and Mental Health so students can combine knowledge with application to mental health. This also introduces careers such as cognitive neuroscience, clinical psychology etc.

Year 13 builds on the knowledge and skills acquired during Year 12. Research methods complete mathematical skills. Then Approaches covering Freud's theory of psychoanalysis is next so students may appreciate the 'bigger picture'. Biopsychology provides students with great insight into careers in medicine together with the next topic of schizophrenia. Forensic psychology stimulates further enthusiasm for careers. Finishing with human relationships. All topics are carefully planned and sequenced to ensure a logical progression.

What is the impact of the Psychology curriculum?

There is a focus on the development of the whole child. A student of psychology will feel like they have the opportunity to pursue a career working with people e.g. Police, nursing, retail management etc. Or more specifically a career as a chartered practitioner e.g. in Forensic, Educational, Clinical psychology etc. They will have the opportunity to build on mathematical knowledge acquired in the previous Key Stages. The subject of psychology contributes to the catholic ethos of the school by focusing on the total learning experience of the child and improving their lives for the better. It teaches young people through knowledge of different theoretical approaches that a human behaviour may be explained through different viewpoints each of which deserves respect. For example, in the topic of Clinical Psychology and Mental Health students gain knowledge of how mental health may be explained by different viewpoints all of which offer possible insight / treatment to those affected. Psychology develops a rich cultural awareness. Through the study of individual differences particularly when looking at the Humanistic perspective, students will appreciate that an idiographic approach in psychology sees the uniqueness of each human person. By considering different perspectives students will develop views and opinions and become emotionally resilient. Through the knowledge of Humanistic psychology students will appreciate how they can all strive for and achieve their full potential. Fundamentally, the curriculum aims to inspire, enable students to develop deep learning and prepare them for the world of work.

What is the focus for change?

The results analysis after public examinations will focus on areas requiring changes. Amendments are made to schemes of work based on this.

