

AS and A-Level Psychology

Entry Requirements: 5 in English Language, 5 in Maths and 5 in a Science.

Exam Board: AQA

Subject Leader: Ms B Walker bwalker@taptonschoool.co.uk

Main Syllabus Area

Students study material which is examined in two papers at AS level and three papers at A-Level:

At AS Level students will study:

- **Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology**

This covers four of the major areas of psychology, namely social influence (which covers topics such as obedience and conformity), memory, attachment (which covers the relationship between a child, its mother and other caregivers, as well as the consequences of being separated from caregivers early in childhood) and clinical psychology and mental health (which covers the application of psychological theory to the explanation and treatment of mental health problems - OCD, phobias and depression).

- **Paper 2: Psychology in Context**

This covers the major approaches in psychology (for example the work of the behaviourists, cognitive neuroscience and Freudian psychology, etc). It also covers the importance of bio-psychological ideas to explaining human behaviour. The research methods commonly used in psychology is also a focus of this paper, although students should note that the theme of research runs through all areas of the course.

At A-Level students will study:

- **Paper 3: Issues and Options in Psychology**

This covers issues and debates in psychology, such as the nature v nurture debate and the gender/cultural biases present in psychological research and theory. It also covers three options, one from each of three categories; In September 2025 we will be covering gender, schizophrenia and forensic psychology (although this is dependent on staff expertise, so is subject to change).

Method of Assessment

At AS Level, both examination papers are 1hr 30mins in duration and use a range of question styles, including multiple choice, short answer questions and extended writing.

At A-Level, all three examination papers are 2 hours in duration and use a range of question styles, including multiple choice, short answer questions and extended writing.

Qualities Required

You will need to be able to work independently and be willing to enter into class discussions. You will need to develop the ability to present ideas, supported by evidence, in structured, effective essays and you will need good time management skills. **It is also**

important that you have a good understanding of the scientific process and an appreciation that psychology is a science A-Level.

Links with other subjects

Psychology is compatible with most other A-Levels. It works well with both science and arts subjects.

Most frequent combinations include Sociology, Biology, Geography, Film Studies and Sport. There are no prohibited combinations.

Career Prospects

A Psychology qualification is preparation for many careers; due to the fact that it involves both literacy and numeracy skills as well as enabling students to develop the skill of scientific enquiry.

Some students work as professional psychologists in the clinical, criminal, educational or occupational fields. Many others use their skills and knowledge in a variety of careers, such as physiotherapy, education, advertising, social work or personnel work.

Extra-Curricular Activities

We run a very well attended social science discussion group, where students can lead discussions about contemporary social science research through books, podcasts and documentaries. We also seek opportunities for students to visit universities, take part in psychology experiments and attend lectures and talks by researchers, authors and other professionals.

Reading List

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath - A novel outlining one woman's experience of depression.

Girl, Interrupted by Susanna Kaysen - A novel outlining the experiences of a woman in a mental health asylum in the sixties.

Room by Emma Donaghy - A novel exploring experiences of a child in captivity.

Running with scissors by Augusten Burroughs - a novel based on the experiences of having a father as a therapist.

A Beautiful Mind by Sylvia Nasar - based on the true story of a world-renowned mathematician who suffered from schizophrenia. (Also, a film).

A Million Little Pieces by James Frey - a Novel based on the true story of an addict's recovery. (Also, a film).

We Need to Talk about Kevin (by Lionel Shriver) - a novel exploring whether violence is in our nature or is nurtured by our environment. (Also, a film)

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey - a novel exploring the experiences of being in a mental health hospital in the sixties. (Also, a film)

The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat by Oliver Sacks - a set of true stories of patients with neurological disorders affecting their perception of the world.

The Neuroscientist who Lost her Mind by Barbara Lipska - the true story of a neuroscientist who suffered a neurological condition herself.

The Wave by Morton Rhu - A novel exploring the power of social groups and how this can create fear in society.

Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men by Caroline Criado Perez - a non-fiction text exploring issues such as clinical drug trials and how data bias affects women's life experiences.

The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil by Phillip Zimbardo
- a book exploring whether social roles in society can create evil.

Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain by Antonio Damasio - a non-fiction text discussing whether emotion can really be separated from the brain.

Independent Study

Suggested Podcasts:

Mind Changers (BBC Sounds) – excellent summaries of key pieces of psychological research.

All in the Mind (BBC Sounds) – radio show with up-to-date information about recent psychological research.

Bad People (BBC Sounds) – podcast discussing criminal cases and what they reveal about the psychology of crime.