



Kimberley  
School

A Level

# PSYCHOLOGY

SIXTH FORM  
HUMANITIES

# What is Psychology?

Psychology is the study of the human mind and behaviour. Psychology tries to explain why we think and do the things we do. We're all psychologists to a certain extent since we all use our knowledge of ourselves and others in everyday life. When we study psychology we discuss the research psychologists have conducted to investigate the way we tick. There are many fields within psychology which we will study in relation to different behaviours and mental illnesses; these include social, developmental, cognitive, psychopathology, and biological."

## Who is it for?

Candidates for Psychology will have a genuine interest in people and trying to understand their behaviour. Psychology is a controversial subject with conflicting viewpoints so enthusiasm for debate and a questioning, open mind is essential. Students will develop skills in analysing and evaluating psychological research including, data collection, presentation and interpretation. You will learn in a variety of ways including use of ICT, group work, participation in studies and developing an awareness of cultural and individual differences and ethical issues. **Candidates need to have English GCSE to level 4 or above and in Maths GCSE a Grade 5 is preferred.** A grade 4 may be accepted following discussions with the SPL for Maths / Head of VI Form regarding suitability.

## What will I study?

The A level course is very much an overview of key fields within Psychology. The AS course covers key areas to give you a flavour of the subject and during the A2 course we extend this knowledge and apply it to specific behaviours, like aggression, and disorders, like schizophrenia. The course content given below briefly describes what will be studied in each unit.

The approach Psychology uses to study the mind and behaviour is fundamentally scientific since we try to be as objective as possible when collecting information about humans and formulating theories based on our observations. Indeed, Psychology is now classed as a science by examination boards (such as AQA) and many Universities. However, Psychology is different from the sciences you will have studied at GCSE since investigations and information about humans are always open to challenge and interpretation. For example, research findings depend on who is being studied and the social and cultural setting of the research. Psychology is often called a social science for this reason and involves gaining knowledge and skills that can fit with any combination of other A-Level subjects.

As well as learning about psychological research you will develop skills in questioning its validity and how usefully it can be applied in real life situations. Psychology is only valuable if it can be used to benefit individuals and wider society. Most professional psychologists are employed in communities, schools, prisons, hospitals, sport organisations, and businesses, where they put their knowledge and skills into practice. We will study the contribution they make. We hope to also organise out of school visits and outside speakers. For example, students have visited the Freud museum in London and have attended conferences hosted by key psychologists such as Elizabeth Loftus (memory) and Phillip Zimbardo (social influence).

Learning about Psychology is immensely fascinating and rewarding in its own right but knowledge of psychology is invaluable in a world where good interpersonal skills are increasingly important. Gaining a qualification in Psychology demonstrates that you have good intellectual ability, research methods skills, and a genuine interest in people.



The course is made up of:

## Year 12: Topics

### Introductory Topics in Psychology



**Social Influence:** How is our behaviour influenced by others? What is conformity? What do we mean by obedience to authority? Why do some people obey and conform more than others? Are there differences in personality? Will we conform to the expectations of certain roles? How easy is it to change society based on what we know about social psychology? How does social change happen?

**Memory:** How does memory work? What are the different types of long-term memory? Which one is most resistant to forgetting? Why and how do we forget information? How reliable are eyewitness testimonies given in the courtroom? How can we ensure that any information provided is reliable and accurate?

**Attachment:** How and why do infants form attachments? What have we learned from animal studies? What is the role of the father in attachment? What attachment types exist? Do they vary depending on culture? What impact on our adult lives do our early experiences have?

**Psychopathology:** How do we decide if someone is 'abnormal'? What definitions are there? What causes 'abnormality' and how can it be treated? We look at the characteristics, causes and treatments of mental illness: Phobias, Depression and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

### Psychology in Context

**Psychological Approaches:** What are the 6 different ways in which psychologists explain human behaviour and mental illness? Psychodynamic, Behaviourism, Humanistic, Social Learning Theory, Cognitive including Neuroscience, and Biological.

**Biopsychology:** What is the structure of the brain? Do different parts do different jobs? What happens if the brain gets damaged? Can it recover? How do we study the brain – fMRIs, EEGs? The role of circadian, infradian and ultradian rhythms. How are these involved in sleep or jet lag?

**Research methods:** How do psychologists collect and interpret data about humans and what are the issues and ethical problems involved? Some maths and statistical tests as well as how to structure a scientific report.

## Year 13: Topics

**Issues and Debates:** Which plays more of a role in behaviour – nature or nurture? What is gender bias? Culture bias? What are the ethical implications of research on our society?

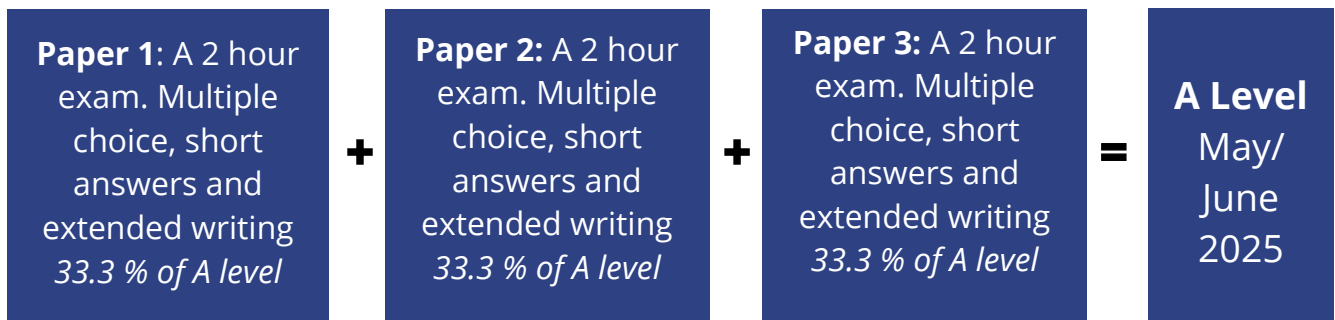
**Relationships** - what factors affect attraction? How and why do romantic relationships form? Why do they breakdown? How are virtual and parasocial relationships different?

**Schizophrenia:** What are the symptoms, causes and treatments of Schizophrenia? Considering the role of biology and cognition. How effective is drug treatment? Token economy?

**Aggression:** what causes aggression? Is it faulty genetics or dysfunctions in chemicals? What are mate-retention behaviours? Are we more likely to be aggressive when we are in a group or when we are frustrated? Why are rates of prison violence so high? What role does the media play in aggression?

***Some of the Research Methods content will be taught in Year 13 instead of Year 12.***

How will I be assessed?



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See Miss Bird, Miss MacMillan or Miss Wilson for further details.

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