



**ST BERNARD'S
HIGH SCHOOL**

Curriculum Guide

Psychology

2025 - 26



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Curriculum Intent

GCSE Psychology

GCSE Psychology introduces students to the scientific study of human behaviour, encouraging curiosity about what shapes thoughts, feelings and actions. The curriculum develops critical thinking, scientific skills and a deeper understanding of everyday life through a psychological lens.

Students begin by studying key areas such as memory, development, psychological problems and social influence. These topics help students explore how individuals learn, grow, and interact with others. Alongside this, they are introduced to core psychological approaches and theories, as well as methods used to investigate behaviour.

Research methods are taught throughout, enabling students to design simple studies, interpret data and evaluate evidence. Practical activities and real-world examples bring the subject to life, helping students see the relevance of psychology in society, relationships, education and mental health.

Subject-specific language is taught and revisited frequently using knowledge organisers, dual coding, and retrieval activities to build secure understanding. Students are also encouraged to reflect on their own behaviours and beliefs and to consider the social impact of psychological research.

The GCSE course supports the development of empathy, reasoning and analytical skills, providing a strong foundation for further study. It fosters personal growth and awareness of the diversity of human experience, empowering students to better understand both themselves and the world around them.

A-Level Psychology

A-Level Psychology engages students in the scientific study of the mind and behaviour, developing their ability to think critically about human experiences. The curriculum explores both core psychological topics and broader theoretical perspectives, encouraging students to analyse, evaluate and apply ideas to real-world situations.

Students begin by examining foundational areas such as memory, attachment, psychopathology and social influence. Alongside these, they are introduced to major psychological approaches, including cognitive, biological, behavioural, and psychodynamic perspectives. Students also gain confidence in research methods, learning how psychological knowledge is developed, tested, and applied.

In the second year, students study more complex topics such as relationships, schizophrenia and forensic psychology. They also explore key debates in psychology, such as nature versus nurture and ethical practice, fostering critical awareness of the discipline's role in society.

Analytical and evaluative skills are embedded throughout, with an emphasis on interpreting data, applying theory and forming evidence-based arguments. Students are encouraged to engage with contemporary research, current affairs and psychological issues in the media, enhancing their understanding of psychology's relevance and impact.

The course nurtures empathy, scientific reasoning, and independent thought. It supports students in understanding themselves and others and equips them with transferable skills valued in higher education and many career paths. A-Level Psychology also supports broader values, including social justice, mental health awareness, and the pursuit of societal wellbeing.

Head of Social Sciences Faculty

Mr J Toms

Head of Psychology Department

Miss L Bower

Year 10

This subject can be chosen as an **option** for GCSE.

AQA GCSE Psychology

Covered in Year 10:

Unit 1 topics: Memory, Development, Perception, and Research Methods

Number of lessons per fortnight and class types:

3 lessons each fortnight, equating to 300 minutes of guided learning. Students are taught in mixed ability classes.

Skills developed:

Introduction to core psychological knowledge, describing and applying key theories and studies, interpreting research data, identifying variables, understanding research design and ethics, and developing structured written responses and critical thinking.

Essential equipment:

Exercise book (provided), blue or black pen, green pen, pencil, ruler, and highlighters.

Students receive handouts and knowledge organisers which must be neatly stuck into their books as part of their learning.

Each student is also issued a GCSE Psychology textbook on loan, which must be returned after their final exam.

Extracurricular and enrichment opportunities:

Discussion-based learning, the use of case studies, documentary analysis, interactive revision tasks, and links to real-world psychological research. Students are encouraged to explore podcasts and short videos to broaden understanding of key topics.

Careers curriculum:

Psychology at GCSE supports a range of career pathways by developing knowledge of human behaviour and introducing students to scientific investigation. Future possibilities include:

- Clinical and Counselling Psychology
- Health and Social Care
- Policing, Criminology and Forensic Psychology
- Teaching and Education
- Youth Work and Social Work
- Marketing and Advertising
- Occupational Therapy and Mental Health Support

Psychology also builds transferable skills in communication, empathy, problem-solving and evidence-based reasoning — all valued in further education and employment.

	Content studied	Literacy focus	What parents can do to help
Autumn Term	Paper 1: Research Methods and Memory	Students begin the course by learning the foundations of Research Methods, including how psychologists design investigations, identify different types of variables, select participants, and ensure ethical standards. They are introduced to key terms such as hypothesis, control, and sampling, which will be built upon across the GCSE course. They also study Memory, exploring the processes of encoding, storage, and retrieval. Students examine the multi-store model, reasons for forgetting, and the impact of context on memory recall. They also evaluate the reliability of	Discuss how psychologists might investigate memory or behaviour. Encourage them to practise using key terms and apply what they've learned to everyday situations — for example, forgetting something or remembering events differently.

		memory, including the formation of false memories. Lessons include practical tasks, key terminology retrieval, and short-answer practice to build confidence early in the course.	
Spring Term	Paper 1: Perception and Development	This term, students explore Perception, examining how we interpret sensory information from the world around us. They study the difference between sensation and perception, depth cues, visual illusions, and theories explaining how perception is influenced by past experience and context. In Development, students learn about how brain development affects behaviour, particularly during childhood. They explore Piaget's theory of cognitive development, including concepts such as egocentrism and conservation, and consider how education can support thinking at different stages. Lessons include key studies, applied scenarios, and opportunities to evaluate psychological theories and research evidence.	Ask your child to explain visual illusions or describe how children think differently at various ages. Encourage them to use key terms and apply psychological theory to everyday examples, such as learning in school or interpreting images.
Summer Term	Exam Technique and Paper 2: Social Influence	In the Summer Term, students begin the topic of Social Influence, focusing on why people conform or obey, and how social factors such as group size, anonymity, and culture affect behaviour. They also explore crowd and collective behaviour, including how being part of a group can influence actions. Alongside this, lessons focus on improving exam technique. Students practise applying psychological concepts to scenarios, answering different types of questions, and developing well-structured written responses. Regular review tasks help reinforce key learning from the year.	Talk to them about examples of peer pressure or following rules, and how people behave differently in groups. Help them revise using flashcards, topic quizzes, or by practising exam questions under timed conditions.

Extra/Further Reading:**Psychology: A Very Short Introduction – Gillian Butler & Freda McManus**

A concise and accessible overview of the main areas of psychology, including memory, development and mental health. Excellent for building curiosity and broad understanding.

The Psychology Book (Big Ideas series) – DK Publishing

A visual guide to key psychological theories, studies and thinkers. Ideal for students who prefer diagrams, timelines and clear explanations.

Blame My Brain – Nicola Morgan

An engaging and relatable book that explains how the teenage brain develops. Links well with the Development topic and is easy to understand.

The Teenage Guide to Stress – Nicola Morgan

Explores mental health, anxiety and coping strategies in a straightforward, reassuring way. Supports learning around Psychological Problems.

Am I Normal Yet? – Holly Bourne

A fictional but insightful novel about a teenager living with OCD. Useful for sparking reflection and discussion on mental health from a psychological angle.

Understanding Psychology – Carolyn Tarrant

Written for students aged 14+, this book introduces psychological ideas through real-life examples, key terms and simple activities.

Mind Hacks for Kids – Michael Radford

An interactive introduction to brain function and behaviour, including fun experiments and clear explanations. Perfect for learners who enjoy hands-on tasks.

Useful Websites:

Psychology | tutor2u – <https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology>

Clear topic summaries, revision resources, and videos specifically tailored to AQA Psychology.

Seneca Learning – <https://www.senecalearning.com/>

Interactive quizzes and topic reviews mapped to the AQA GCSE specification.

Simply Psychology – <https://www.simplypsychology.org/>

Useful for deeper reading on key theories, studies, and research methods (more suited to stretch and challenge).

BBC Bitesize – GCSE Psychology – <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/zksr8mn>

Topic overviews, quizzes and short explanations suitable for revisiting key content quickly.

Year 11

Covered in Year 11:

AQA GCSE Psychology

Unit 2 topics: Language Thought and Communication, Brain and Neuropsychology, and Psychological Problems

Number of lessons per fortnight and class types:

3 lessons each fortnight, equating to 300 minutes of guided learning. Students are taught in mixed ability classes.

Skills developed:

Further development of psychological knowledge and exam technique, including analysing behaviour using different approaches, evaluating studies and theories, interpreting and applying research data, and building confidence in extended writing and application to real-life scenarios.

Essential equipment:

Exercise book (provided), blue or black pen, green pen, pencil, ruler, and highlighters.

Students continue to receive handouts and knowledge organisers, which must be neatly stuck into their books.

All students retain the GCSE Psychology textbook on loan, which must be returned after their final exam.

Extracurricular and enrichment opportunities:

Ongoing opportunities include applying theory to real-life situations through case studies, discussion-based learning, practice with exam questions, and revision resources such as podcasts, documentaries, and structured retrieval tasks.

Careers curriculum:

Year 11 content explores mental health, brain function, communication and behaviour in social contexts — all of which link directly to future study and employment. Potential career pathways include:

- Clinical, Forensic and Educational Psychology
- Health and Social Care
- Policing, Youth Work and Social Work
- Teaching and Education
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Counselling and Mental Health Support

The subject continues to build transferable skills such as analytical thinking, empathy, structured writing, and decision-making - all valuable in sixth form, apprenticeships and the workplace.

	Content studied	Literacy focus	What parents can do to help
Autumn Term	Paper 2: Language, Thought and Communication, and Brain and Neuropsychology	Students begin Year 11 by studying Language, Thought and Communication, exploring how language influences thought, differences between human and animal communication, and the role of non-verbal communication such as gestures and posture. They learn key theories from Piaget and Sapir-Whorf and evaluate studies supporting or challenging these ideas. They then move on to Brain and Neuropsychology, learning about the structure and function of the brain, the role of the nervous system, and how neurons transmit information. Students also explore the effects of brain damage and study tools used in neuroscience, including scanning techniques. Lessons focus on applying theory to real-life examples, interpreting data, and developing	Ask them to explain how people communicate without speaking or how different brain areas control behaviour. Help them revise key terms using flashcards and encourage them to practise exam questions using model structures.

		strong written responses to exam-style questions.	
Spring Term	Paper 2: Psychological Problems and Revision	<p>In the Spring Term, students study Psychological Problems, focusing on the causes, symptoms and treatments of conditions such as depression and addiction. They explore biological and psychological explanations for mental health issues and consider the impact of mental illness on individuals and society. Treatments such as drug therapy and CBT are compared and evaluated.</p> <p>Alongside this, students begin structured revision of previously studied topics, focusing on strengthening exam technique, applying knowledge to scenarios, and improving extended written responses. Lessons include practice questions, recap quizzes, and retrieval tasks designed to prepare students for the demands of the summer exams.</p>	Discuss mental health in the media or everyday life. Encourage your child to explain different causes and treatments for disorders and help them revise key content from earlier topics using revision guides, flashcards or timed questions.
Summer Term	Revision and Exam Preparation	<p>In the short Summer Term, students focus entirely on revising all units from the GCSE Psychology course. Lessons are dedicated to reviewing key topics, refining exam technique, and building confidence with past paper practice and structured writing tasks. Activities include retrieval practice, timed questions, model answer breakdowns, and targeted revision based on student needs. Emphasis is placed on using psychological terminology accurately and applying theories and studies to real-world scenarios.</p>	Help them set a revision timetable and stick to it. Use revision guides, flashcards or online quizzes to test their recall of key studies and concepts. Practising short and long answer questions under timed conditions is especially helpful at this stage.

Extra/Further Reading:**Psychology: A Very Short Introduction – Gillian Butler & Freda McManus**

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Topic overviews, quizzes and short explanations suitable for revisiting key content quickly.

Year 12

AQA A LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

Covered in Y12: Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology, Paper 2: Psychology in Context

Number of lessons per fortnight:

5 lessons each fortnight, equating to 500 minutes of guided learning.

Skills developed:

Acquisition and application of psychological knowledge, critical analysis of studies and theories, evaluation of evidence, interpretation of research data, essay writing, investigative methods, ethical understanding, problem solving, and independent thinking.

Essential equipment:

Folder, dividers, plastic wallets, lined paper, blue or black pen, green pen, red pen, pencil, ruler, highlighters.

Students are able to access classroom copies of the textbooks for Psychology but it is recommended that they purchase their own copies if possible.

Extracurricular and enrichment opportunities:

Talks and workshops with psychologists or university lecturers, virtual research sessions, opportunities to engage in psychological experiments, revision conferences, debate and discussion groups, analysis of psychological themes in documentaries and podcasts.

Careers curriculum:

Psychology opens doors to a wide range of careers by combining scientific enquiry with a deep understanding of human behaviour. Example career paths include:

- Clinical or Forensic Psychology
- Educational Psychology
- Counselling and Mental Health Support
- Occupational Psychology and HR
- Social Work
- Marketing and Consumer Behaviour
- Law and Criminology
- Teaching
- Nursing and Allied Health Professions

	Content studied	Literacy focus	What parents can do to help
Autumn Term	Paper 1 Topics: Social Influence Paper 2 Topics: Research Methods and Approaches in Psychology	<p>Students begin their studies by exploring key explanations for why individuals conform or obey authority, analysing landmark research such as Milgram's obedience studies and Asch's line study. They examine resistance to social influence and the role of social change, developing evaluation and analytical skills along the way.</p> <p>Alongside this, students are introduced to the foundations of psychological science through the study of research methods. They learn how psychologists plan investigations, collect and analyse data, and ensure reliability and validity in their work. Students also explore the major psychological approaches - including the behavioural, cognitive and biological</p>	<p>Encourage them to discuss what they're learning by asking them to explain why people conform, how the brain and nervous system influence behaviour, or how experiments are designed. Prompt them to make links between theory and real-life situations (e.g. peer pressure, media influence, mental health). Support their revision of key terminology and research studies with the use of flashcards, summaries, and regular low-stakes quizzes.</p>

		<p>perspectives - learning how these schools of thought differ in their explanations of human behaviour.</p> <p>Homework tasks include interpreting experimental designs, applying theoretical concepts, and developing structured written responses.</p>	
Spring Term	Paper 1 Topics: Attachment, Memory, and Psychopathology	<p>This term, students complete their study of Attachment by examining Bowlby's theory of monotropy, the impact of early bonds on later relationships, and research into institutional care and cross-cultural variations.</p> <p>In Memory, students explore how memories are encoded, stored and forgotten. They evaluate key models and apply knowledge to real-world issues such as eyewitness testimony and misleading information.</p> <p>Psychopathology covers definitions of abnormality and the causes and treatments of phobias, depression and OCD. Students assess behavioural, cognitive and biological explanations, making links back to earlier topics.</p> <p>Students complete regular exam-style questions, case-based tasks and retrieval activities. Enrichment includes research documentaries, mental health podcasts and applied reading. Homework focuses on applying theory and developing extended responses.</p>	<p>Discuss real-world examples that relate to mental health, memory, or early childhood experiences.</p> <p>Ask your child to explain how psychologists study memory, or to compare different treatments for disorders like OCD. Encourage regular review of research studies, key terms, and model answers using revision tools such as flashcards, mind maps, or online quizzes.</p>
Summer Term	Paper 2 Topics: Biopsychology and Research Methods	<p>In the Summer Term, students are introduced to Biopsychology, exploring the structure and function of the nervous system, the endocrine system, fight or flight responses, and the localisation of function in the brain. They also examine biological rhythms, including the sleep/wake cycle.</p> <p>Research Methods is revisited with a deeper focus on experimental design, statistical analysis, and interpreting and presenting data. Students refine their skills in planning investigations and evaluating psychological research, in preparation for Paper 2 and Paper 3 assessments.</p> <p>Students engage with practical applications of theory, including analysing case studies and completing timed assessments. Enrichment includes articles on brain research, revision podcasts, and tasks applying methods to real-world psychological studies.</p>	<p>Discuss topics like stress responses or the role of hormones in behaviour.</p> <p>Encourage your child to practise applying research methods terminology and interpreting data from graphs and tables. Using flashcards and past paper questions is especially helpful this term.</p>

A Level Psychology Reading List:

- **The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat** – A collection of real-life neurological case studies by Oliver Sacks that illustrate how brain damage can impact behaviour, memory and perception.

- **Opening Skinner's Box** – Retold accounts of ten classic psychological experiments, exploring ethical issues and the lasting impact of research on our understanding of human nature.
- **The Lucifer Effect** – An examination by Philip Zimbardo (of the Stanford Prison Experiment) exploring how ordinary people can commit extraordinary acts under certain conditions.
- **Memory: From Mind to Molecules** – A scientific overview of how memory works, combining cognitive psychology with neuroscience.
- **The Psychopath Test** – Jon Ronson's exploration of the psychology of madness, focusing on psychopathy and how it is identified and treated.
- **The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog** – A clinical psychologist's account of trauma and attachment, demonstrating the lasting impact of early childhood experiences on development.
- **Rebel Ideas** – A psychological look into diversity of thought, group behaviour, and collective intelligence by Matthew Syed.
- **Attachment Theory in Practice** – A more advanced but accessible text by Sue Johnson, ideal for those interested in psychotherapy and real-life applications of attachment theory.
- **Hallucinations** – Another compelling work by Oliver Sacks, delving into the nature and causes of hallucinations, blending psychology and neurology.

A-Level Psychology Watch List:

- **Horizon: How You Really Make Decisions** – A documentary exploring cognitive biases and dual-processing models.
- **Louis Theroux: Extreme Love – Autism & Dementia** – Insightful, human-focused episodes on two key developmental and cognitive issues.
- **The Mind, Explained** – A visually engaging series covering memory, anxiety, dreams, mindfulness, and more.
- **Three Identical Strangers** – A gripping true story touching on twin studies, ethics, and nature vs nurture.
- **CrashCourse Psychology (YouTube)** – A fast-paced but clear overview of key psychology topics.
- **The Brain with David Eagleman** – A six-part series on how the brain works, covering consciousness, perception, and decision-making.

Useful websites:

- **Simply Psychology** – <https://www.simplypsychology.org/>
Clear, research-based summaries of theories, studies and key debates.
- **Tutor2u Psychology** – <https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology>
Topic summaries, exam support, and revision activities tailored to AQA.
- **PsychBoost** – <https://www.psychboost.com/>
High-quality video content, revision guides and teaching materials.
- **Seneca Learning** – <https://senecalearning.com/en-GB/>
Interactive revision quizzes mapped directly to the AQA Psychology spec

Year 13

AQA A LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

Covered in Y12: Paper 3: Issues and Options

Skills developed:

Students continue to develop the key skills introduced in Year 12 with increased emphasis on critical evaluation, synoptic thinking (making connections across topics), research design, data analysis, extended essay writing, and the application of theory to novel contexts. Students are expected to take greater ownership of their learning through independent reading, critical engagement with current psychological research, and exam-focused study.

Essential equipment:

Folder, dividers, plastic wallets, lined paper, blue or black pen, green pen, red pen, pencil, ruler, highlighters. Students continue to have access to classroom copies of the AQA Year 2 Psychology textbook but are encouraged to obtain their own copy for home study and revision.

Extracurricular and enrichment opportunities:

In Year 13, students are offered further opportunities to engage with university-level psychology, including talks from academic psychologists, access to journal articles, and deeper critical discussions. Students are encouraged to explore areas of interest through extended reading, participation in psychological research, and use of podcasts and media to enhance their understanding of Paper 3 options such as Schizophrenia, Forensic Psychology, and Relationships.

Careers curriculum:

Psychology opens doors to a wide range of careers by combining scientific enquiry with a deep understanding of human behaviour. Example career paths include:

- Clinical or Forensic Psychology
- Educational Psychology
- Counselling and Mental Health Support
- Occupational Psychology and HR
- Social Work
- Marketing and Consumer Behaviour
- Law and Criminology
- Teaching
- Nursing and Allied Health Professions

	Content studied	Literacy focus	What parents can do to help
Autumn Term	Paper 3 Topics: Forensic Psychology, Schizophrenia, and Issues & Debates	This term, students study Forensic Psychology, exploring offender profiling, biological and psychological explanations for criminal behaviour, and methods of dealing with offenders. They also examine Schizophrenia, including its symptoms, causes, and treatments such as drug therapy and CBT, with a focus on	Discuss real-life examples linked to crime or mental health. Encourage them to explain different theories and develop balanced arguments using evidence.

		critical evaluation and application. In Issues and Debates, students consider major themes across psychology such as nature vs nurture, free will vs determinism, and cultural and gender bias. This synoptic topic encourages deeper thinking and essay writing across the course.	
Spring Term	Paper 3 Topic: Relationships Paper 2 Topic: Research Methods (Year 2 content)	This term, students study Relationships, exploring theories of attraction, factors affecting romantic relationships, and virtual relationships. They evaluate explanations such as social exchange theory and investigate the role of attachment in romantic behaviour. Alongside this, students build on their understanding of Research Methods, focusing on advanced topics including statistical testing, reliability and validity, and features of science in psychological research. There is a strong emphasis on synoptic thinking and refining exam technique through timed essays, data handling tasks, and practical application of methods.	Encourage them to apply theories to real-life relationship scenarios and explain research designs and statistics in simple terms. Regular retrieval and timed practice will help consolidate learning.
Summer Term	Revision and Exam Preparation	In the Summer Term, students focus entirely on consolidating their knowledge across Papers 1, 2 and 3. Lessons are dedicated to reviewing all topic areas, improving exam technique, and strengthening essay structure, evaluation and application skills. Students practise timed responses, work through past papers, and revisit challenging concepts through targeted revision and feedback sessions. There is a strong emphasis on retrieval practice, synoptic links and applying knowledge under exam conditions.	Help them create and stick to a revision schedule. Encourage them to use past papers, self-mark using mark schemes, and actively recall content using flashcards or quizzes. Talking through topics out loud is a highly effective revision strategy.

SEE Y12 FOR USEFUL READING, WATCHING AND WEBSITE RESOURCES.