

St Paul's Academy

GCSE Psychology Curriculum Overview

Why we teach Psychology at St Paul's Academy

We teach psychology as SPA as it covers real-world topics like memory, criminal behavior, sleep and dreaming, and psychological problems, making the subject feel very relevant to everyday life. The course offers a perfect balance between science and understanding people, combining scientific research methods with the study of emotions, behaviors, and social issues. Edexcel places a strong focus on research skills, teaching you how psychologists design experiments and analyze results — valuable abilities for many future careers. It also helps you develop critical thinking by encouraging you to question theories, compare explanations, and explore complex ideas, which are important skills in almost any field. Finally, the course provides a clear structure, helping students feel more confident when preparing for exams, and it builds a strong foundation for progressing to A-Level Psychology.

Disciplinary Knowledge

Research methods: How psychologists design experiments, collect data, and draw conclusions.

Theories and evidence: Understanding how psychological theories are created and tested using real-world evidence.

Critical thinking: Being able to question and evaluate psychological studies, spotting strengths, weaknesses, and biases.

Ethics: Knowing what is considered right or wrong when studying people in psychological research.

Application: Using psychological ideas to explain real-world behaviour or solve problems.



Substantive Knowledge

Key theories: For example, learning about Eysenck's personality theory or Bartlett's theory of memory.

Important studies: Like learning the details of Bandura's Bobo Doll experiment on aggression or Freud's study of Little Hans.

Psychological concepts: Understanding ideas like conditioning, social learning, obedience, mental health disorders, etc.

Topic knowledge: Such as knowing how sleep affects the brain, what causes phobias, or how criminals might be profiled.

St Pauls Academy
Psychology Key Stage 4 Curriculum Map – Topics by Term

<i>SK themes and colours</i>	Key Theories	Important Studies	Psychological Concepts	Topic Knowledge	
<i>DK Big Ideas and Colours</i>	Research Methods	Theories and Evidence	Critical thinking	Ethics	Application

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 10	<p><u>Introduction to Psychology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the study of Psychology <p><u>Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Brain development Piaget's stages of development and role in education Piaget's theory of Cognitive development <p><u>Research Methods Part 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing Psychological research Identifying and controlling unwanted variables Types of Hypothesis and 	<p><u>Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dweck's mindset theory Willingham's learning theory and the effects of learning on development Development studies- Piaget and Inhelder (1956) and Gunderson et al (2013) Issues and debates around the development of morality <p><u>Research methods part 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different research methods used Data analyses including 	<p><u>Memory</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The structure and processes of memory and information processing Features of Short term and long term memory Two types of Amnesia: retrograde and anterograde The active process of memory through Bartlett's (1932) Theory of reconstructive memory The structure of Memory through Atkinson and Shiffrin's (1968) Multi-store 	<p><u>Memory</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memory studies by Bartlett (1932) and Peterson and Peterson (1959) Issues and debates around reductionism and holism <p><u>Psychological Problems</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive theory as an explanation of depression Learning theory as an explanation of addiction Use of CBT as a treatment for depression and addiction Use of drugs as a treatment for 	<p><u>The Brain and Neuropsychology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of neurological damage on cognitions and behaviour Neuropsychological studies by Demasio et al (1994) and Sperry (1968) Issues and debates about how the study of Psychology has changed over time The role of the central nervous system and how neurons and synapses interact <p><u>Social influence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Key terms associated with social influence 	<p><u>Social influence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How conformity and obedience influence crowd behaviour Ways to prevent blind obedience to authority Social influence studies by Piliavin et al (1969) and Haney, Banks and Zimbardo (1973) Issues and debates around social and cultural issues in psychology <p><u>Revision</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prep for PPE's Exam skills <u>How to revise</u> Walking talking mock Flashcards Retrieval quizzes Mindmaps

	<p>how to write them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampling methods • Types of research and experimental designs • Issues with reliability and validity • Ethical issues 	<p>arithmetic and numerical computation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of descriptive statistics • The use of graphs and how to illustrate data • Primary and secondary data • Qualitative and Quantitative data • Ethical issues associated with psychological research 	<p>Model of Memory</p> <p><u>Psychological Problems</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The symptoms and features of two mental health problems; unipolar depression and addiction • How the number of people diagnosed with depression and addiction has changed over time • Influence of Genes on mental health and addiction 	<p>depression and addiction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies investigating mental health by Caspi et al (2003) and Young (2007) • Issues and debates around the Nature and Nurture debate <p><u>The Brain and Neuropsychology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure and function of the Brain • The lateralisation of function in the hemispheres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors that affect bystander intervention • Factors that affect conformity to majority influence • Factors affecting obedience to authority figures 	
Year 11	<p><u>Criminal Psychology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How learning theories can be used to explain criminality • How biological explanations can be used to explain criminality, including Eynsenck's (1964) personality types • The effects of punishment on 	<p><u>Criminal Psychology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two ways in which criminals are rehabilitated to encourage prosocial behaviour in prisons; token economy and anger management programmes • Studies investigating criminality by Bandura, Ross and Ross (1961) 	<p><u>Research method recap</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key terms • Mathematical skills recap • Data • Exam practice • Exam skills <p><u>Paper 1 Recap</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key terms • Key studies • Exam practice • Exam skills 	<p><u>Revision</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision based on topics students struggled in Y11 PPE's • <u>How to revise</u> • Walking talking mocks • Flash cards • Retrieval Quizzes • Mindmaps • Student led creation of revision powerpoints 	Exams	

	<p>whether criminals reoffend</p> <p><u>Sleeping and dreaming</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The features, functions and benefits of sleep • The internal and external influences on sleep and the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations • The symptoms of and explanations for the sleep disorders insomnia and narcolepsy • Freudian theory of dreaming (Freud 1900) and the strengths and weaknesses of the theory 	<p>and Charlton et al (2000)</p> <p><u>Sleeping and dreaming</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation-synthesis theory (Hobson and McCarley,1977) and the strengths and weaknesses of the theory • Studies investigating sleep and dreaming by Freud (1909) and Siffre (1975) <p><u>PPE prep</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision based on topics students struggled in Y10 PPE's 				
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