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Psychology Curriculum

Intent

Curriculum Vision

Understanding human behaviour allows us to predict human action. Through the study of psychology students learn the possible causes of human behaviour, both their own and that of others. Students discuss the value of each human being as unique, and how allowing diversity can be celebrated.

1. Students develop an understanding of the branches of psychology and research within these. Students develop their own opinions about human behaviour and the causes of human actions, such as learning needs, mental health, crime, and conformity. Students explore each area of psychology, comparing and contrasting current research with previous research findings. Students assess the validity of this research and develop an understanding of its contribution to that area of psychology.
2. Students develop an in-depth understanding of scientific vocabulary and concepts and an understanding of statistics in research that enable them to assess the level of significance in a piece of research. Students can make informed decisions as to the validity and reliability of the research undertaken.
3. Students develop critical and creative thinking skills that enable them to address the limitations of the methods used in previous research papers, and make suggestions as to how to improve the research using blinding techniques and types of counterbalancing.
4. Student use their knowledge to develop their own research, producing a formal report examining the significance of their findings. Students use examples from scientific journals to guide their research and conduct statistical analysis to discover if they have found a significant result.

Concepts and Skills

The overarching concepts for Psychology include research methods. Students will learn how to conduct psychological research, the methods used, reliability and validity of these methods. Students will also develop their understanding of the concepts of ethical research and will use these to decide if research is ethical or not based on cost/benefit analysis. Students study statistics in order to identify whether any research shows a significant difference; they then apply these statistics to the psychology as a science debate.

Further concepts include structures of the brain, including the function and location of each lobe, the limbic system, neuroplasticity, neuronal growth, identifying damage to areas of the brain. Perspectives in psychology are used to explain human behaviour in differing ways. This includes:

- cognitive psychology - students learn how thinking develops and how thought patterns can lead to changes in behaviour
- biological psychology - students learn about the structures of the brain and neuroplasticity, and explain how learning develops through creating neural pathways
- developmental psychology - students study how the human 'psyche' develops, referring to how we develop cognitive traits and morals
- individual differences - students learn about how human behaviour is completely unique and how this links in with intelligence, special educational needs and mental health
- social psychology - students learn about how human behaviour changes depending on the situation a person is in, and how helping behaviour changes depending on group norms and size.

Each area of psychology then links back to the concept of debates including nature vs nurture, reductionism vs holism, psychology as a science, free will vs determinism, socially sensitive research, ethics and ethnocentrism.

Disciplinary Literacy

Disciplinary approach

In Psychology we support the development of disciplinary vocabulary and the students' ability to read, write and communicate at an academic level so that they master the nuances of the curriculum. At Key Stage 5 students need to have an awareness of the complexity of studies and how to make interpretations from studies and sets of data. Therefore, as well as acquiring the vocabulary required to communicate, students will also develop reading strategies allowing them to increase their awareness of scientific vocabulary and gain the opportunity to verbalise this newly acquired vocabulary. This will allow students to understand journals in detail and depth and then analyse and compare research as academics.

At A-Level, students' command of both tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary is vital in order for them to be able to understand the content and to complete extended writing tasks. Tier 2 vocabulary gives students the language of analysis, whereas tier 3 vocabulary gives them the disciplinary language required to understand concepts and communicate as a Psychologist. To ensure students develop both, the department spends time explicitly looking at the language of analysis as well as equipping students with tier 3 terminology through the use of the Frayer Model and Psychology work packs. Students are then able to use these packs for subject-specific terminology, which can help them evaluate research in Psychology.

Interdisciplinary approach

In order to support the mastery of key concepts in Psychology, our interdisciplinary approach unites elements of English, Science and Statistics. Many of the skills required in Psychology are complementary to those skills used in these other areas. These skills include: forming analytical arguments drawing on a range of studies to come to a coherent and substantiated conclusion; mathematical skills to be able to analyse the data in a range of studies as well as analyse students' own data when creating their own experiments; developing knowledge of what makes a piece of research scientific; and comparing research to assess how scientific the research is. Students will also develop an understanding of how recent research develops our understanding of particular areas in Psychology, including why people obey authority, the development of mental health, and the causes of criminal behaviour.

Intellectual autonomy

In order to develop intellectual autonomy and confidence, we foster the willingness and ability of students in Psychology to comprehend challenging texts, assimilate key concepts and synthesise them with prior learning. Students are equipped to think critically and apply strategies independently so that they can form their own cohesive conclusions and be able to express that in writing.

This is facilitated by a range of resources and journals which are used to assess how research into particular areas of psychology has developed over time. This can be seen when studying biological psychology where previous research is compared with more recent research to then be able to highlight how our understanding of a particular area has developed.

In addition, students have access to the department's ever-growing range of academic Key Stage 5 resources held centrally in our library. These include research articles on topics studied by students, such as obedience and the bystander effect, and memory and the effects of leading questions on recall.

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Students are encouraged to engage in additional independent reading to deepen their understanding. Recommended texts include: *OCR A-Level Psychology* (Oxford University Press), *Psychological Review* journal articles (American Psychological Association), and articles located on the student shared area and the website *Simply Psychology*.

Application of Mathematics

The curriculum recognises the need for students to be able to apply mathematics effectively. In Psychology students use and develop their knowledge of descriptive statistics/measures of dispersion and to research methods. Students are then expected to display this in an appropriate mathematical format and draw conclusions for the data. Students then select the appropriate statistical test they could use for their research and then work out the level of significance for this.

For example, when conducting experiments after initially conducting their memory experiments students are expected to work out the averages from the data set; they are then able to display this in a graph and draw conclusions from their research.

Independent Study

In Psychology students undertake both directed and self-directed independent learning activities that support the strengthening of long-term memory and retrieval. Independent study helps our students achieve mastery in Psychology and prepares them to work at an undergraduate level.

Directed independent learning tasks set in Psychology can include background reading to build knowledge and deeper connections to the existing frame of learning, or responding to interlocking questions on a given topic across more than one text source. Self-directed independent study in Psychology involves retrieval practice which is a crucial component of mastery. As students encounter challenges and learn to wrestle with demanding concepts and texts, they develop not only their knowledge and understanding but also resilience through perseverance.

Instead of revision being perceived as something that is crammed into a few weeks, independent study supports spaced practice throughout the curriculum. By repeatedly returning to content covered, students' knowledge has time to 'rest and be refreshed.'

We recognise that not all students process material at the same rate. Students who need extra support to achieve mastery are supported by targeted intervention in Psychology where a staged or 'scaffolded' process is used to enable them to move from being dependent learners to autonomous ones.

All students have access to our Academy library where a wide range of academic texts, journals and other resources are available.

Implementation

Overview Statement

The curriculum in Psychology is sequenced coherently so that knowledge, concepts and skills are rigorously developed over time. This supports all students, including the most disadvantaged, and

those with high levels of need, especially SEND. Planning is informed by Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction and Cognitive Theory which support students in building secure schemas.

Interdisciplinary links and the application of mathematics are explicitly referenced and exploited in order to deepen understanding. Vocabulary is developed in Psychology using the principles outlined in the Frayer Model and students are equipped to be able to read, write and speak like a Psychologist. This is done by introducing students to key vocabulary through the use Frayer Model, key vocabulary lists, the reading of subject-specific articles which link in tier 2 and tier 3 language, as well as discussion and tasks that aid students' ability to verbalise this terminology. Extended writing tasks enable the students to be able to structure their writing and write scientifically when writing journal articles.

Through the use of independent study resources in Psychology, students learn at greater depth so that they can become masters in Psychology and in the skills required to be intellectually autonomous. This is implemented by students reading around the areas of Psychology, and researching tasks on the background of a topic and the application of a topic in the real world. This can involve news articles about current or previous events which may be used to support/contradict a study or a theory. Journal articles are used to help students understand the depth and level of critique in scientific writing; they can then use this understanding when carrying out their own psychological research.

Regular retrieval-based activities strengthen long-term memory and aid fluency, as do our cumulative mid-term and end-of-year assessments. This is also done through frequent knowledge checks and starter activities as well as through the implementation of a logically sequenced curriculum which allows learners to build on their previous knowledge of research methods and regions of the brain.

Technology is employed through the use of computers for research tasks, video clips and Kahoot quizzes to strengthen learning.

Learning character is developed through our six learning applications. Students develop and demonstrate *resilience* in Psychology due to the sensitive nature of many of the topics and are able to continuously challenge one another's opinions and assumptions. *Empathy* and *collaboration* are demonstrated when discussing areas with particular sensitivity, such as mental health, brain damage, intelligence and race, and the causes of criminal behaviour. *Independence* is developed through students conducting their own research and analysing the results, as well as through frequent extended writing tasks. *Awareness* is developed through learning about the practical applications of psychology and how it can be used in the real world, such as in the health care sector and in the education system. *Creativity* is developed through the design and implementation of students' own research.

Impact

The Key Stage 5 curriculum builds upon students' initial understanding, extending their knowledge in the areas of research methods, biology, social psychology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, mental health and crime. Through developing their knowledge of the different branches of psychology, students are able to critique research, design their own research based on limitations of previous research, apply research from Psychology to the real world, as well as make suggestions about how the findings of research could be used in the real world, and the strengths and weaknesses of this. Students also develop an understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of their studies and this is supported though explicit cross-curricular links in History where students read and understand sources/research and develop extended writing skills, as well as Further Maths, where students engage in hypothesis testing and make inferences from data sets.

Students use their knowledge of cognitive theory to recognise and use the most impactful methods of revision and retrieval practice.

Academic progress in Psychology is recognised through the OCR A-Level qualification which acts as a benchmark of mastery; this provides students with the national currency needed for access to higher education and apprenticeship courses, and prepares them for a career in any workplace.