

## Course Structure:

### Year 12

**-Social Psychology-** this area of Psychology look at obedience- why do people do what they are told even if they know it is wrong; social pressure and conformity; prejudice- looking at in-group and out-group prejudice within our society

**-Cognitive Psychology-** this area focuses on memory such as short term and long term memory; memory disorders and case studies (e.g. a man who has a 30 second memory).

**-Biological Psychology-** this area looks at aggression and the biological processes behind this, brain and neurotransmitter functioning and how they affect behaviour including areas such as schizophrenia.

**-Learning Theories-** this area focuses on conditioning, social learning theory and how these can be used to explain behaviours like phobias

### Year 13

**-Clinical Psychology** which focuses on abnormal behaviours such as schizophrenia, depression, eating disorders, how Psychology classifies abnormal behaviour, as well as how disorders can be treated.

**-Criminal Psychology** which explains causes and treatments of criminal behaviour alongside studying how factors affect eyewitness testimony and how jury decision making can be biased.

**Psychological Skills:** This area looks at the research and design of specific Psychological studies. You will get to apply your knowledge of research methods to plan and carry our own psychological research.

### **Assessment:**

**100% exam based on short answer and long answer questions**

**Paper 1** (Social, Cognitive, Biological and Learning theories)

**Paper 2** (Clinical and Criminal)

**Paper 3** (Psychological skills)

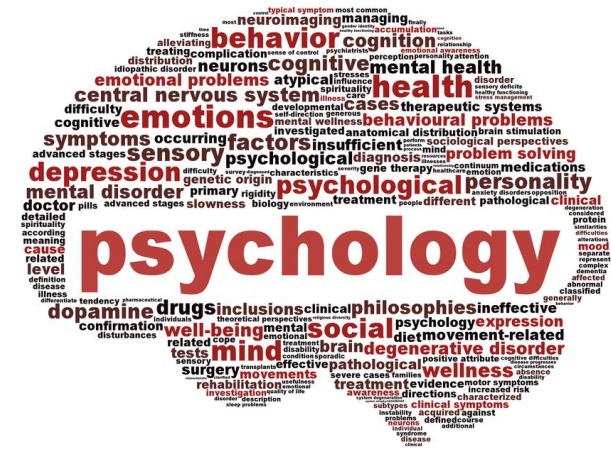
**Entry Requirements:** 5 in English/Lit and a 5 in Maths.

### **Curriculum Leader: Mrs K Mitchell**

Should you, or your son or daughter wish to discuss further anything about psychology, please do not hesitate to talk to me at school. Alternately, my email address is

**[k.mitchell@tgs.starmat.uk](mailto:k.mitchell@tgs.starmat.uk)**

# Psychology A-Level



## Tadcaster Grammar School



1557  
Tadcaster  
Grammar School

# What is Psychology?

**“It’s all about thoughts and feelings isn’t it?”**

This is a phrase that is regularly heard when the topic of psychology arises. Psychology is a relatively new subject, and there exist a number of misconceptions about what it is. Therefore, before talking about what psychology is, **it might be better to talk about what psychology isn’t:**

## **It’s not an easy subject**

Psychology is a rigorous, academic subject, requiring good skills in English, Maths and Science. For every theory in psychology, there are about 10 opposing theories! Therefore it is a subject which requires good critical thinking and evaluative skills.

## **It’s not just common sense**

While psychological research often confirms what we think we know about human behaviour, often the results of scientific investigation go against what we think is true. For example, did you know that 65% of people are willing to give a fatal electric shock to a stranger if a man in a lab coat tells them to? (*Milgram, 1963*)

## **Psychologists are not always trying to analyse you. It’s not all about thoughts and feelings and/or crazy people!**

A common mistake is to confuse *Psychiatry* (or *counselling*) with *Psychology*. Psychology is the study of brain and behaviour, whereas psychiatry is the practice of helping people with mental health issues. While psychologists are often interested in psychological disorders, often they are much more interested in explaining normal behaviour!



## **“So what is it?”**

**Simply put, psychology is the study of people, behaviour and the mind. It has recently been reclassified as a science subject, and this is reflected in the A level curriculum.**

It is a broad subject, with many different areas and a number of different approaches towards explaining behaviour. Not all psychologists agree with each other!

Psychologists observe human behaviour, create theories to explain the behaviour, and then carry out research to test these theories.

Psychology is a challenging subject, requiring commitment and hard work. Ultimately though, the hard work is rewarded with a deeper understanding of people and society, and perhaps even yourself!

## **What sort of things will I learn about?**

### **Examples of A Level content**

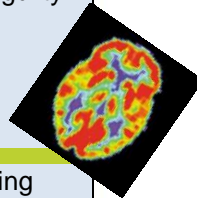
#### **Loftus and Palmer (1974)**

They discovered that when eyewitnesses to a car crash were asked “How fast were the cars going when they **smashed** each other?” they gave a higher speed estimate than people who were asked the question “How fast were the cars going when they **contacted** each other?” This shows that just the way a question is worded can alter our memory.



#### **Raine (1997)**

He compared brain scans of violent criminals to a control group and found that there is different brain activity in criminals. For example they have a much larger amygdala which is associated with violence and impulsiveness. There are moral implications of this if criminals pleaded not-guilty based on brain scans!!



#### **Bandura et al (1961)**

Showed children a video of an adult behaving aggressively towards an inflatable toy doll. When the children were allowed to play with the doll, they likewise behaved aggressively. He used these results to develop a theory that can explain how aggression can be learned through imitation. He called this the *Social Learning Theory of Aggression*.

