

BTEC Applied Psychology at MV aims to broaden a student's understanding of themselves, others and society through the encouragement of tolerance, improved understanding of difference and an appreciation for the motives behind the behaviour of others. It is our genuine hope that not only will students enjoy their studies, but they may come to learn more about themselves as part of the process.

The majority of students come to MV with no previous educational experience of psychology. None of our feeder schools offer GCSE psychology. Many students are keen to learn more about criminal psychopaths, a topic that makes up an extremely small proportion of what psychology is about but dominates mainstream media, which has coloured their understanding of the specialism. Before the course begins in earnest, myths surrounding the subject, such as the belief that psychologists can read minds, are dispelled. Students are reminded that whilst some aspects of their study will be extremely thought provoking and inspiring, expectantly leading to enjoyment, there are many aspects of the course (particularly those routed in biological psychology and neuroscience) which are extremely complex. This is particularly true of the Health Psychology unit (studied in Year 2 of the programme), which requires an understanding of neurotransmitters, hormones and their functions in the body. This particular curriculum combines both examination and coursework components.

Many of the topics required of the subject, such as psychological approaches and applications in Year 12, provide our expert teachers with opportunities to improve student wellbeing and teach beyond the confines of the specification. For example, inclusion of Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment and Milgram's study of obedience to authority help to enrich student appreciation of ethical issues that have arisen in historical psychological research. In addition, students are encouraged to practice the methodological techniques undertaken by psychologists. For example, in Year 1 they will conduct a pilot study and report their findings using appropriate academic conventions, rather than just learning about them in an abstract way. They receive feedback on their research via group presentations, helping them to build skills that will be invaluable in the world of work. Moreover, cross-curricular links can be seen in many aspects of the course, i.e. students gain a brief appreciation of therapies such as mindfulness and bio-feedback as treatments used to deal with stress and addiction. Topics such as addiction and crime, primarily studied in the second year, also provide opportunities for students to begin to appreciate the inequalities in society that make individuals more vulnerable to psychological distress. As a result, they begin to appreciate a world beyond their own locality. This is further enriched by the necessity to consider the contemporary issue of gender in Year 1, helping students to understand the complexities surrounding a person's unique identity, encouraging mutual respect and a wider appreciation of diversity.

By the end of the second year, students will not only have a broad understanding of psychology as a scientific discipline, but they will be well placed for further study and employment. They will have a broad range of experiences, which mean not only will they excel academically but they will be familiar with tasks required of undergraduate study and in the workplace, particularly as there is growing demand for psychological expertise

in the health sector or within marketing and advertising via social media. The hope is that students studying BTEC Applied Psychology will have a profound understanding of the importance of their own psychological wellbeing and, as such, they will continue to find success beyond life at MV.