

Intention of Psychology

A level 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, and a student's understanding of the subject is thus often gleaned from popular psychology circulated in the media. Many are particularly keen to learn more about criminal psychopaths, a topic that makes up an extremely small proportion of what psychology is actually about, but dominates mainstream media. Before the course begins in earnest, myths surrounding the subject, such as the belief that psychologists can read minds, are dispelled during induction/taster days. Potential 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 and difficult for students to comprehend. Psychology has a requirement of 10% maths in its assessment, due to its designation as a science subject – something that often surprises potential students, but should not be a barrier to participation.

Many of the topics required of the subject provide our experienced teaching staff with opportunities to improve student wellbeing and teach beyond the confines of the specification. For example, inclusion of Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment and Harlow's research on Rhesus monkeys help to enrich student appreciation of ethical issues that have arisen in historical psychological research. In addition, students are encouraged to practice positive psychology principles rather than just learn about them, such as mindfulness and gratitude journaling, to maintain their own wellbeing. Moreover, cross-curricular links can be seen in many aspects of the course, i.e. students gain a brief appreciation of art therapy as a complementary treatment used with schizophrenics. Topics such as addiction and crime, 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.

By the end of the second year of study 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. For example, the use of academic poster presentations to display their personal investigations (they design and conduct two pieces of psychological research) paired with their ability to construct written responses that are well structured and articulated, are invaluable skills for their future. The hope is that this, paired with a more profound understanding of the importance of their own psychological wellbeing, means they will continue to find success beyond life at MV.