

De Lisle College Curriculum

“Rooted and grounded in Love”.

A Level Psychology



Intent – ‘Rooted and grounded in Love’

Intent – Rooted

At De Lisle College, our Psychology curriculum is shaped by the mission to develop well-rounded, inquisitive, and ethically minded young people who can think critically about human behaviour and the world around them. Rooted in academic excellence and the values of Catholic Social Teaching, our curriculum aims to empower students with the knowledge, skills, and moral awareness necessary to engage meaningfully with both scientific theory and the human experience.

Psychology is introduced at A Level, and so our curriculum begins by laying the foundations of disciplinary and substantive knowledge. We begin with Research Methods to establish an understanding of scientific thinking and investigation, which underpins all psychological inquiry. This is followed by the study of the core psychological approaches—behaviourist, cognitive, biological, psychodynamic, humanistic, and social learning—providing a theoretical framework through which all later topics are explored and understood.

Our curriculum is deliberately sequenced and revisited to ensure that students build knowledge cumulatively and retain it long term. Disciplinary knowledge is developed through increasingly sophisticated evaluation, moving from core concepts such as validity and reliability to wider considerations such as ethics, bias, the role of culture, and the practical applications of research. This builds students' ability to "think like psychologists": to question, challenge, analyse, and reflect on the world around them.

Psychology offers a powerful lens through which to promote Catholic Social Teaching. Through the study of topics such as mental health, social influence, and attachment, students consider the dignity and worth of every individual, develop empathy and understanding for those facing adversity, and explore how systems and structures can be shaped for the common good. Students are encouraged to appreciate the uniqueness of every individual (dignity of all people) and to recognise how psychological theory can contribute to more ethical and just outcomes in research and in society.

We explore the impact of extreme obedience through historical and contemporary examples such as the Holocaust or Abu Ghraib, prompting reflection on solidarity, the dangers of silence in the face of injustice, and the importance of standing with those who suffer. In learning about mental health, addiction, and social development, students are taught to show compassion and to put the needs of the most vulnerable first (option for the poor). The ethical principles guiding psychological research, such as informed consent, protection from harm, and respect for autonomy, align closely with Catholic values, reinforcing the importance of stewardship, participation, and subsidiarity.

Our curriculum is enriched by real-world applications and wider reading, helping students develop cultural capital, curiosity, and ambition. We nurture analytical thinkers who can apply their understanding of human behaviour to everyday interactions, future study, and careers in sectors such as education, healthcare, law, and criminal justice. We aim for our students not only to succeed academically but also to leave the course as compassionate, respectful individuals—prepared to contribute positively to the wider world.

We support all students in reaching their potential through inclusive teaching practices, structured writing support, and opportunities for extended learning. High expectations, combined with supportive relationships and adaptive teaching, help students to grow in confidence, resilience, and independence.

Ultimately, A Level Psychology at De Lisle College enables students to understand themselves and others more deeply, to ask challenging questions about behaviour, society, and ethics, and to leave with a strong moral compass and a love of learning that will remain with them far beyond the classroom.



Psychology

Year 12

Curriculum Outline

Link to Catholic Social Teaching:

In Year 1, students begin by developing strong foundations in Research Methods, equipping them to critically analyse human behaviour with integrity and scientific objectivity, reflecting the CST principle of *subsidiarity* by giving voice to diverse individuals and communities through ethical and inclusive research. The study of different psychological Approaches encourages respect for the *dignity of all people*, recognising the complexity of the human person and the variety of explanations for behaviour. Topics such as Social Influence and Memory enable students to examine how individuals are shaped by – and can resist – social pressures, reinforcing the importance of *participation* and *solidarity* in building inclusive communities. The Attachment and Psychopathology topics emphasise the significance of early relationships, mental wellbeing, and care for the vulnerable, resonating with the *option for the poor* and a commitment to the *common good*. In exploring the biological underpinnings of behaviour in Biopsychology, students are encouraged to appreciate the *stewardship of creation*, valuing the human body and mind as gifts to be understood and respected.

Advent 1	Year 1 Research Methods	Advent 2	Year 2 Research Methods (Nov) Nov – Dec Approaches & Memory
Description	Students are introduced to the foundations of psychological research. They will learn about experimental methods, observational techniques, self-report methods (such as questionnaires and interviews), and case studies. This term focuses on understanding how psychologists investigate behaviour using scientific methods.	Description	Building on the first half-term, students explore key scientific processes such as hypotheses, variables, sampling techniques, ethical considerations, and data analysis. Towards the end of term, they begin studying the different approaches in psychology, including behaviourist, cognitive, and biological perspectives. They also begin exploring how memory works, including models of memory and why we forget.

Lent 1	Attachment & Social Influence	Lent 2	Attachment & Social Influence
Description	Students explore how people are influenced by others, including conformity, obedience, and resistance to social pressure. They also study attachment in infancy, including key theories, the impact of early relationships, and the importance of secure attachments for later development.	Description	This term deepens students' understanding of how social and emotional relationships shape human behaviour. They also evaluate key studies, such as Ainsworth's Strange Situation and Milgram's obedience experiments.
Pentecost 1	Psychopathology & Year 1 Biopsychology	Pentecost 2	Psychopathology & Year 1 Biopsychology
Description	Students investigate definitions of abnormality and study explanations and treatments for mental health conditions such as phobias, depression, and OCD. In Biopsychology, they begin to learn about the structure and function of the nervous system, including how neurons and hormones influence behaviour.	Description	Students continue with mental health and biological psychology, examining the role of the endocrine system and the body's response to stress. By the end of Year 1, students will have a strong foundation in understanding both the psychological and biological explanations for behaviour.

Psychology

Year 13



De Lisle College
A Catholic Voluntary Academy

Curriculum Outline

Link to Catholic Social Teaching:

In Year 2, students deepen their understanding of complex psychological theories and issues affecting individuals and society. Across all topics, Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is embedded through discussion and reflection on how psychological research can promote human dignity, challenge injustice, and support the common good. Students are encouraged to reflect on ethical considerations and the importance of standing in solidarity with vulnerable individuals and communities, especially in topics like schizophrenia, gender identity, and institutional aggression. The principle of **Dignity of the Human Person** is central in understanding mental health and respecting neurodiversity. Through discussions of **Social Sensitivity**, **Cultural Bias**, and **Ethical Implications**, students consider the importance of **Subsidiarity**, **Participation**, and **Option for the Poor** in both psychological theory and practice.

Advent 1	Year 2 Biopsychology	Advent 2	Issues & Debates & Gender
Description	In Year 2, students explore more advanced topics in Psychology, including the workings of the brain, controversial issues in research, and explanations and treatments for complex behaviours. These topics build on Year 1 foundations and prepare students for applying psychological knowledge in real-world contexts and exams. In the first half-term, students explore how different areas of the brain influence behaviour, including functions like vision, language, and movement. They learn about key areas such as Broca's and Wernicke's and consider what happens when the brain is damaged. Students are also introduced to how the brain can recover through plasticity and functional recovery. The topic also covers methods of studying the brain, such as fMRI scans and post-mortem examinations, helping students understand how biological psychology is researched.	Description	In the second half-term, students critically explore key issues and debates within Psychology, such as whether behaviour is caused by nature or nurture, the extent to which we have free will, and how gender and culture can bias research. Ethical implications of psychological research are also examined. Students then begin the Gender topic by looking at how biological factors (like hormones and chromosomes), as well as cognitive and social influences, affect gender identity and development. They also explore gender diversity, including non-binary and gender fluid identities, and how media and culture shape gender roles.

Lent 1	Gender & Schizophrenia	Lent 2	Schizophrenia & Aggression
Description	In this half-term, students complete the Gender topic and then move on to studying Schizophrenia. They learn to identify positive and negative symptoms of the disorder and explore the complexities and challenges of diagnosis. Explanations for the disorder are examined from both biological (e.g. genetics, dopamine) and psychological (e.g. family dysfunction, cognitive processing) perspectives. Students also begin to consider the range of available treatments, such as antipsychotic drugs and cognitive behavioural therapy.	Description	Students continue their study of Schizophrenia by evaluating different treatment options and considering the benefits of an interactionist approach, including the diathesis-stress model. They examine the impact of the disorder on individuals and wider society, and how treatment approaches can be personalised. Throughout, students are encouraged to think critically about the strengths and limitations of each explanation and intervention. In this half-term, students begin the final topic: Aggression. They explore the biological basis of aggression, including the role of brain structures, hormones, and genetics. Evolutionary explanations of aggression are also studied, as well as social psychological theories like the frustration-aggression hypothesis and deindividuation. Students consider real-world examples of aggression, including in institutional settings like prisons, and how aggression may be influenced by exposure to violent media and video games.
Pentecost 1	Aggression & Revision	Pentecost 2	Revision
Description	Students complete the topic of Aggression and move into structured and focused preparation for their final A Level exams. Lessons focus on reviewing key content from both Year 1 and Year 2, strengthening students' ability to write high-level essays, apply psychological knowledge to novel scenarios, and evaluate theories and studies with depth. This half-term is designed to build confidence and ensure students feel ready for their examinations.	Description	In the final term, once the core content has been completed, lessons will be fully dedicated to exam preparation. Students will revise all Year 1 and Year 2 topics through a wide range of targeted strategies. These will include timed practice questions, walking–talking mock papers, peer and teacher feedback on exam responses, retrieval quizzes, and structured essay planning. There will also be a strong focus on applying knowledge to unfamiliar scenarios, strengthening evaluation skills, and developing effective exam timing. Students will revisit past papers and examiner reports to understand what high-level answers look like and how to avoid common pitfalls. This term is designed to build confidence, deepen understanding, and ensure every student is fully prepared for their final A Level Psychology exams.