



# Psychology

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This year saw the launch of PsychSoc, an extracurricular activity that offers Year 13 and 14 pupils the opportunity to explore psychological concepts, debates and approaches through the use of film, documentaries and guest speakers. Pupils do not have to study A Level Psychology to attend, but it does help! Films and debates are normally held every other month on a Tuesday after school in the lecture theatre, where popcorn is provided! This year's films included 'The Shawshank Redemption', when we questioned if we are all inherently evil with the potential to react in violent and aggressive ways, given specific situational factors. We also debated if institutional aggression is determined by biology and personality or if it is largely determined by the power of the situation you find yourself in. On a slightly lighter note we also watched 'As Good as It Gets', a comedy drama that addresses Psychopathology, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Personality Disorder and Social Influence in relation to attitude change.



We have also enjoyed listening to guest speakers, the most recent being Dr. Sarah Riley, a reader in Psychology at Aberystwyth University and identity researcher, who discussed how we make sense of ourselves in relation to health, gender, bodies, appearance and social groups, such as youth cultures, through her talk entitled; 'If looks could kill: The social aspect of body image and how we might use that to build resilience'.

Members of PsychSoc who study Psychology are also eligible to enter the Northern Ireland Branch of the British Psychological Society's A Level

Research Competition. This year the BPS held this annual competition on December 4th at Ulster University, Coleraine. This event is the brainchild of committee member John Dennison, an A Level Psychology teacher, and Dr Barbara McConnell, NIBPS Secretary and is hosted jointly between NIBPS and the 3 Northern Ireland Universities.



This was the first year that Banbridge Academy had participated in the event, entering three teams who represented the Academy and the Psychology Department excellently. Our Year 14 budding psychologists, Amber McLoughlin, Ciara Carmichael and Joanna Greenaway, excelled and were consequently awarded first place for their presentation on, 'The perception and reality of student helpfulness'. The other research studies that our pupils conducted were entitled, 'The effect of leading questions on memory', and 'Is iced-water really that cold? A study of self-deception' and both were commended by the judging panel for their excellent standard of work.

As well as having the opportunity to present their research, the students were judged and questioned by representatives from Queen's University, Ulster University, The Open University and a representative from the British Psychological Society. Eleven groups presented to an audience of over 100. All presenters received a specially cast medal and the first and second placed groups were presented with trophies and were invited to present at the NIBPS 2016 Annual Conference in March 2016. Although slightly daunted by the

prospect of having to present to a wide range of professional psychologists from both industry and academia at such a prestigious event, Amber, Ciara and Joanna availed of this opportunity and yet again represented the school superbly. This opportunity also allowed the girls, and the school, to establish and strengthen links with professional Psychologists working in many different areas. All three girls are going on to study Undergraduate Psychology, Amber and Ciara at St Andrew's University and Joanna at Queen's University, and many of our Year 13 competitors have decided to enter the competition again this year.

The Year 13 pupils also received the opportunity to attend the 19th Annual ATP Psychology Student Conference at Queen's University. This is a one-day intensive AS Psychology revision day hosted by Dr. Chris Gibbons, APT, and past AQA Principal Examiner, Julia Willerton. Pupils attended a variety of lectures and seminars on key syllabus areas including memory, attachment, social influence and psychopathology, and they participated in a research methods workshop and quiz. As in previous years two pupils, Niamh MacCormac and Daris Benallal, won recently published Psychology books for their participation in the day's activities. Given the extremely positive feedback from pupils with regards to how well it prepared them for their examination, it is our intention to attend the event in the upcoming year.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Katherine Neill who was such an inspiring member of the Psychology class. Her work and her attitude were exemplary to us all, embracing every opportunity to learn with relentless positivity, which continued even in the face of such adversity. Not only did Katherine win the Psychology Prize for Top Marks at AS in 2015, but she worked with determination to achieve an Honouree A\* in A level Psychology. Katherine was a truly inspirational girl and I feel blessed to have had the privilege of teaching her.

