

Years 10 and 11

Sociology is the study of society and throughout the course, we aim to understand and explain the way our society is structured and the way people behave. The course is linear and is examined at the end of year 11 with two exam papers. There is no coursework element to GCSE sociology.

In GCSE sociology, students will learn about: families, education, social stratification, crime and deviance and the way that sociologists carry out research to find out about these topics and concepts. They will learn about theories and approaches which sociologists have developed and apply them to their studies. Most of the content will be based on life in the UK but will link to more international issues and examples as appropriate. This helps students to build up an understanding and awareness of the world in which we live and broadens their general understanding of society which is important for young people in today's world.

Students will be expected to develop knowledge of the subject, be able to add evaluative comments and to apply their knowledge to society to show their understanding. These are the main elements to students being able to work well in sociology. They are also the key things which examiners will look for in exam answers.

It is useful for students to try to build up their general knowledge and to be interested in current affairs. Watching the news or documentaries is a good way to build up sociological understanding. Reading a quality newspaper will help to build up examples which can support answers in the exam. Sociology helps students to have an appreciation of the way the world changes and is interrelated whilst societies and individuals maintain their own individual characteristics.

Year 10

We start year 10 by studying the unit on methods and basic terms in sociology. This provides a basis for further learning and is also important as methods can be included in any section of the course. Students will learn about the different ways sociologists gather information and the ways that information can be used in society. It will enable students to develop questioning skills which are key to all analysis and evaluation in sociology but also help them to look at current affairs examples and develop their opinions and understanding. Primary and secondary sources are considered and their respective values to sociologists are discussed.

We then move on to study the family. This is seen as a major influence in our society on the way people live and behave. The course looks at the way there are many different types of family, how they influence people when growing up and the way families change over time and in different cultures. It allows students to see the changes which take place over time and from society to society and so broadens their understanding of the way we are influenced by our norms and behaviours and the people around us. It also introduces the concept that not everyone will see the world in the same way and so helps to build a foundation for some of the later work done in sociology. It encourages students to question the way people live in units and the great variety of family structures which exist.

The last unit we study in year 10 is education. Education is another influence in our society and can have great effects on young people and their futures. The course looks at the types of education we have in Britain, the way education is organised and the way education can have different effects. It also looks at how different groups in society can have varying experiences of education. This unit is a good step in students developing their own understanding of education and the impact it can have on people's lives. Again, it looks at the differences between different societies but also introduces the idea of alternatives within society and

the range of different views which exist. It allows students to use their own knowledge and experience to add to their written answers which then helps to develop depth of argument and analysis.

Year 11

We begin year 11 by studying the unit on crime and deviance. This unit looks at the range of reasons why some people may commit crimes, how different societies consider different behaviours to be deviant or crimes and how there may be a range of punishments which society uses. We study examples from different times and different places so that students can understand a range of social views and understand the concepts of historical and cultural deviance. The unit looks at different influences on society and the way social control is carried out. This can help students to understand the range of options society uses to ensure norms and laws are conformed to. It also enables students to discuss these issues both verbally in class but also in written work in essays so students can show their skills in written work. As this is the first unit taught in year 11, students by this point should have built up a range of knowledge and techniques so they are encouraged in this unit to use them to perform at a higher level with their analysis of evidence such as crime statistics, news reports and other public sources.

The last topic we study is stratification and the way society can be divided into different groups or strata and the way this can affect life experience and life chances. This unit is probably the most complex and draws on new knowledge but also uses examples and ideas that students have covered in the earlier units, eg the way educational achievement can be influenced by position in society or why some areas of society can experience environmental poverty. It draws together lots of the concepts we have already learned and so falls at the end of the taught units. It includes concepts which students will have an awareness of but covers the formal definitions and explanations which students can then apply to general society. Concepts such as social status, social influence and poverty are part of the unit and it challenges some of the more commonly held stereotypical views which builds thinking and evaluation skills in our older students.

By studying the units in this order, it allows students to develop their knowledge and understanding from a starting point in units where they will have some awareness already of some of the content we study and builds to more complex terms and theories in the later units where students can use their previous learning. It also reflects the structure and content order of the real exams at the end of the course. The theoretical aspects of the course introduce students to some of the basic theories in sociology and explain how sociologists see the world. The two main theories used are Marxism and functionalism which have contrasting views of how society links together and influences our lives. These theories run throughout the course and are linked to some of the named studies which students have to learn. The named studies are chosen as they come from a range of times and sociologists to give a broad foundation of sociological work. Other theories such as feminism are also studied in some units to show the impact that sociology can have on the real world and perhaps change the way society thinks and behaves.

Many students find that they can develop their work by including examples and references from their own knowledge and experience and by using current affairs. In this way, sociology can be a subject which increases student awareness and understanding of the ever changing world around us and helps them to prepare for life in the adult world.