



**Making Good Progress –
Parents Supporting Students at
Haydock High School**

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In a recent study, the following ten characteristics were most commonly associated with students who made good or accelerated progress during secondary school.

The students:

- 1 were determined and focused in their approach to their work;
- 2 accepted and often enjoyed high levels of challenge presented by their teachers;
- 3 analysed their own strengths and weaknesses;
- 4 were prepared to work independently without direct supervision;
- 5 were resilient and did not become disheartened when faced with disappointments;
- 6 had a clear long-term goal in mind, either in terms of a career or further education, which acted as a significant motivator;
- 7 were good at getting the most out of working in a pair or group;
- 8 displayed other talents and interests (e.g. music, sport, etc) which they developed alongside their school work;
- 9 readily sought and received help from home;
- 10 formed productive and effective 'learning partnerships' with their teachers based on mutual respect.

Many of the students interviewed in this study felt that their families contributed to their good progress in school.

"My mother was a tremendous support. She attended all the parents' evenings and helped me to structure my revision."

These notes have been produced for you as parents and carers. They focus on the first eight characteristics, offer key questions that you can ask your child about these characteristics and suggest ways that you may be able to support your son/daughter so that he/she makes good progress.

Top Tips for Students

1. Get focused

This is the foundation for many students who make great progress.

Key questions

- How organised and conscientious are you in the way you approach your work?
- How determined are you to succeed?
- How well do you concentrate when working in school or at home?
- Will you go that 'extra mile' and do extra work or revision when you need to?

How might you help your child?

- Look for opportunities to demonstrate how focus and determination lead to improvement and success, e.g. training in sport, practice and rehearsal in dance and music.
- Encourage your son/daughter to plan time when they will do his/ her homework and further study at home. Find some incentives to help him/her to keep to the plan!
- If you have internet access at home, ensure your son/daughter can work on the computer when he/she needs to – perhaps by planning regular time slots during the week. Help younger children (who may also want time on the computer) to see why this time is special and important.

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2. Accept and enjoy the challenge

Learning is rarely straightforward and so your son/daughter will come up against obstacles and difficulties.

Key questions

- How do you react when you are asked to do something harder than usual?
- Are you prepared to work outside your 'comfort zone'?
- Will you sometimes take the harder option when given a choice?

How might you help your child?

- If your son/daughter describes their work as 'boring' or 'easy', encourage them to ask their teacher for something more challenging to try.
- Show your son/daughter how you enjoy a challenge.
- Do puzzles, crosswords or Sudoku together.
- Do something different together – visit a gallery or museum, see a film or read a book - **then talk about it!**

3. Build on your strengths, work on your weaknesses

Your son/daughter knows probably better than anyone what he/she can do well and what is more difficult. Being honest and realistic about strengths and weaknesses is a key part of the learning process.

Key questions

- How often do you reflect on your work and pin-point the things you need to work more on?
- How often do you tackle some of the harder pieces of work when you are fresh rather than leaving them until last?

How might you help your child?

- Encourage your son/daughter to talk to you about the topics he/she finds difficult in different subjects.
- Help him/her to use the textbook and class notes to explore difficult topics.
- Encourage your son/daughter to talk to their teacher as he/she will also want to help.

"My parents helped me but only when I needed it – I think this has made a big difference."

4. Learn to work on your own

Sometimes students just need to spend some time on their own to see if they can 'get their head round' what they are doing. They also need to know what to do if they get stuck.

Key questions

- How do you work when you are on your own?
- Are you happy to work on your own at school as well as at home?
- Are you prepared to sort out things for yourself and use books and computer web-sites to help you?
- Do you have a few self-help strategies that work well for you?

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How might you help your child?

- Encourage your son/daughter to make use of resources at school, e.g. from the library or learning resource centre
- Check if you can buy or borrow the revision guides the school recommends.
- Encourage your son/daughter to use revision websites recommended by the school.
- If necessary, help your son/daughter to access and begin to use these websites.
- Encourage re-visiting of lesson notes and re-reading of set texts.

5. Get the most out of working with others

Learning is often much more productive when you do it with others. Talking about ideas and comparing approaches can really help to improve understanding.

Key questions

- How do you get on when you are working with a group?
- Do you listen and make contributions?
- Do you try out your ideas and understanding on your friends and compare their approaches with your own?

“My brother was great and really helped me with my mathematics.”

How might you help your child?

- If your son/daughter socialises with friends at home, encourage him/her to spend some time talking through homework together.
- Get your son/daughter to talk you through a piece of work, particularly if he/she is finding it challenging.

6. Stay positive – don't give up

Being resilient is really important. There will be times when things are just not working in certain subjects. Overcoming these difficulties can really motivate your son/ daughter and help him/her to make even more progress in the future.

Key questions

- How do you react when your results are not as good as you'd expected them to be?
- If you don't achieve your target grade this term how do you feel about next term's target?
- How good are you at pulling yourself out of a bad patch?

How might you help your child?

- Try to refocus your son/daughter on their longer term goals and targets and help him/her to identify the things to do to achieve these.
- Talk to your son/daughter about whether he/she needs support from others to get back on track, e.g. their teacher or a learning mentor.
- Help him/her to pinpoint the problems to discuss with their teacher/learning mentor.
- Encourage your son/daughter to review his/her progress with you.

7. Be ambitious for the future

Many students are motivated by career aspirations. Your son/daughter doesn't need to have a definite career in mind but it can be helpful to have some idea of what work in school might be leading to and whether he/she is on track to achieve his/her aim.

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Key questions

- What are your hopes and ambitions for the future?
- Do you have any idea of what you would like to do when you leave school?
- What qualifications are you likely to need to follow this aspiration?
- How far do you feel you are on track to achieve your aim?

How might you help your child?

- Support your son/daughter in finding out about the qualifications needed to achieve his/her hopes and ambitions for the future.
- Encourage him/her to aim high – by trying to exceed the qualifications to keep options open.
- Talk to your son/daughter about your own career or the careers of other family members or friends.

8. Try and develop as many talents and interests as possible

Many students have talents and interests, such as those associated with music or sport. Committing time and energy to these can often have positive spin offs for other work in school. Extra-curricular activities can help to develop confidence, organisational skills, self-discipline and good communication skills.

Key questions

- What do you like to do when you are not at school?
- Do you commit quality time to developing your talents or interests?
- Do you participate in any extra-curricular activities linked to the school?

How might you help your child?

- Encourage your son/daughter to continue with his/her interests or develop new ones.
- Encourage your son/daughter to participate in clubs or activities offered by the school.

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