

# Persistence

The aspect of Intellectual Character that school will focus more closely on during this half term is 'persistence'.

Persistence can be thought of as having the grit and determination to stick with it when situations are challenging and to recognise the importance of intellectual struggle. It includes having the willingness to seek alternative ways of doing things when you come up against an obstacle.

*'It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer.'* Albert Einstein

Children often have the misconception that role models who are good at a particular activity have always found it easy. As a headmaster, I have found this to be untrue. What I have found to be true includes the following examples:

- The best sportsman in the school attend more training sessions than anyone else and also have the discipline to train on their own.
- The best musicians practice their instrument more frequently and for longer periods of time.
- Those who gain the best exam results spend more time on homework, and revise the most.

What can pupils do to show 'persistence'?

## 1. Have a definite purpose

This must be reinforced by a burning desire to achieve targets. This links with the work discussed in the previous leaflet on 'aspiration'. Decide what you want to be good at and take positive actions to get better.

## 2. Have a plan

This must be continuous, prolonged, and broken down into manageable chunks. Making effort consistently, and over a period of time is crucial. Having this effort become part of a routine and lifestyle is how those who achieve success make it all look so easy. Nobody notices because it seems to happen as part of every day life.

## 3. Have a positive mindset

There will inevitably tough times – this is part of being persistent. Guard against negative and discouraging influences. Don't listen to those who may distract to suit their own purpose and not yours – particularly when motivation is being tested.

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#### 4. Use the support of those around you

Build and maintain relationships with those that will support you achieving your targets. Teachers, parents, and friends should all appreciate and admire your persistence and support the desire to achieve your goal. Being able to rely on encouragement when the inevitable failures occur will be crucial to keeping you motivated.

##### Examples of Persistence

There are many really high profile examples of people and organisations who have shown persistence by adhering to the four steps described above:

- NASA had 20 failed attempts to send a rocket into space from 28 missions.
- Katy Perry was dropped from three record labels before her first hit single. Her first recording label went bankrupt after selling just 200 copies of her debut album.
- J K Rowling was rejected by 12 different publishing houses before signing a deal on the Harry Potter books.

Modern life is full of examples where technology is in danger of producing a culture when immediate gratification rules. Connection to the internet gives instant communication and instantaneous knowledge acquisition. We are in danger of losing our ability to persist.

We've all shown persistence in our lives already. How much time and effort does it take for toddlers to learn how to walk?! The four steps outlined were all put in place even if, as toddlers, weren't aware of it; there was a definite purpose, a plan, a positive mindset, and plenty of support was provided. Similarly with learning to ride a bike and several other examples that many of us will have been through. We are all born with the capacity to persist but we must nurture this characteristic and not take it for granted.

*'It always seems impossible until it's done' Nelson Mandela*

Work hard. Accept failure as an opportunity to improve. Stay patient.

Jason Slack  
Headmaster

