Junior Club Progression

I am often asked: how does my child make progress in chess? I have set out below the progression route for improvement in junior chess. There are no short cuts, and we have to be realistic and say that not everyone is going to be a champion. It is about being the best you can be, if you enjoy the game. The route set out below is to make a junior the best they can possibly be. It is a route that can be followed without unnecessary pressure, and everyone will have their point where they don’t want to progress further. No junior should be forced passed this point. This is different from encouragement when things get difficult – sometimes the desire to give up is just a phase, and a break can be just as good, then return to it afresh.

1. Regular play at the club. Regular attendance, with good coaching input and advice is absolutely necessary. Chess is a game that has many levels, and without good advice and regular competitive play progress will not happen.
2. Enter competitions outside the club at junior level. This will provide a measure of progress and experience playing different players under tournament conditions. It is a vital component and needs to be done regularly (one or two tournaments a year will not lead to improvement).
3. Record games and ask for advice. This is important. Juniors should learn chess notation, record some games (doesn’t have to be every game, and sometimes if it is just the first 10 moves that is enough) and bring them to the club for their coach to look at.
4. Enter a national competition. This could be the British Junior Championships or something similar.
5. Play for the county. There are opportunities to play for the county and these should be taken up, so experience is gained against other national players.
6. Play in an adult league or in adult congresses. Many juniors avoid this, and I understand why, but it is totally necessary to improve. You can enter a congress at the minor level, and the experience of long play chess is very important to gain in depth understanding.

Further advice is always available from John and Nick at the club. I do not know any junior who has gone on to be successful who has not done so via this route. Progress requires commitment from the player AND their parents.

Leeds Junior Chess Club exists to provide a safe, friendly environment for youngsters to play chess and progress.

Club Details and credentials:

Club supervisor: John Hipshon (BSC (Hons), PGCE, MA (Ed)), Accredited ECF coach and arbiter, Yorkshire Junior Chess Association Organiser.)

Chief Coach: Graham Nixon (BA Hons, PGCE, Accredited ECF Coach)

Ass. Coach: Amanda Hipshon (MSc Phys Geog), ECF Arbiter)

All members are affiliated to Alwoodley Community Association.