

# Duo tackle PSLE – despite battling cancer

Gerome Tay, Lim Rui Ze suffer ill health but opt not to skip exam

Jolene Ang

They both missed a large chunk of school due to medical crises, and could have been exempted from school exams or taken an additional year before sitting the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE).

But 11-year-old Gerome Tay and Lim Rui Ze, 12, both chose to take the national exam this year as scheduled. Yesterday, they returned to their respective primary schools to collect their PSLE results.

Gerome, who turns 12 on Jan 1, did well enough to qualify for a few schools of his choice in the Express stream.

He was diagnosed with lymphoma, a cancer that starts in the immune system, when he was a Primary 4 pupil in Ai Tong School.

He had to stop school for about 18 months as the chemotherapy he received affected his already weakened immune system. Going to school would have increased the chances of him catching a bug.

Gerome also had to stop his co-curricular activity, wushu, as it was too strenuous.

His maths teacher, Madam Yap Joo Koon, visited him once a week to help him catch up on what he missed in class. She even helped him with his English and science subjects.

During the treatment, he lost his hair, which was a big struggle for him and his family.

Said his mother, Mrs Sylvia Tay, 39: "He would wake up and find hair on the bed and he would be so shy and embarrassed because he thought he was making a mess. I had to reassure him every day that it was all right, and eventually he chose to shave it all off."

Mrs Tay, who runs a music company, said the experience has given her a new perspective: "As long as he's happy and living well, whichever secondary school he goes to doesn't matter."



Ai Tong School pupil Gerome Tay, 11, with his parents Kelvin Tay, 45, and Sylvia Tay, 39, at the school after receiving his PSLE results yesterday. Gerome was diagnosed with lymphoma, a cancer that starts in the immune system, when he was in Primary 4, causing him to stop school for about 18 months as he underwent chemotherapy. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

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