



Pupils from Zhenghua Primary School collecting their PSLE results yesterday. Those eligible for secondary school can access an online system to submit their school choices up till Wednesday. ST PHOTO: JEREMY KWAM

Two pupils who prevail in the face of medical challenges

FROM B1

Gerome is now in remission and goes to the hospital every two weeks for a review and blood test. Next April, the frequency will be reduced to once a month.

"It has been very painful. But it has made me stronger," he said.

For Rui Ze, who was diagnosed with medulloblastoma (a cancerous tumour in the brain) barely three months into Primary 1, the journey has been just as challenging.

The surgery which removed the tumour caused him to lose his motor skills as well as the ability to speak.

He had to learn how to write, speak and walk all over again.

During treatment, he stopped attending school for about 15 months and instead spent time at the Children's Cancer Foundation's learning centre - Place for Academic Learning and Support. It helped him keep up with his peers in school.

While his condition has improved, speaking and writing are still difficult. He is also dependent on a wheelchair or walking frame to move around, and uses a ventilator to help him breathe.

He was allowed to use a computer to type out English compositions when sitting school exams and the PSLE, as his arm cramps easily from writing. He was also given extra time to do all his papers.

His mother, Madam Shereen Wong, a 41-year-old former teacher, recalled: "In Primary 3, when he returned to school, he had such a hard time that even with extra time given to him for exams, he could write only three sentences for the English composition component."

His father, Mr Lim Wei Hong, also 41, said sports has really helped Rui Ze on the road to recovery.



Tao Nan School pupil Lim Rui Ze, 12, with his parents Lim Wei Hong, 41, and Shereen Wong, 41, at the school before receiving his PSLE results yesterday. He was diagnosed with a brain tumour in Primary 1. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

Rui Ze is part of the junior hand-cycling team under the Para Cycling Federation of Singapore. He won a silver medal in the 200m race at the National Para Games last year, an experience he described as "tiring".

But when asked if he has ever thought of giving up in his fight to recover from his illness, he said: "Never. My parents always tell me to do my best. That's what they always do." The Straits Times understands he is able to progress to secondary school.

Across the island, 40,256 pupils sat the PSLE this year, up from 39,672 last year.

For the fourth year running, 98.4 per cent of this year's batch did well enough to progress to secondary school. It matched the rate in 2016, 2017 and last year, and remains the best performance since

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From 1980 to 2015, between 81.7 per cent and 98.3 per cent of pupils who sat the PSLE were eligible to enrol in secondary schools.

This year, 66.3 per cent of the cohort qualified for the Express course, down from 66.6 per cent last year. Another 21 per cent are eligible for the Normal (Academic) course, and 11.2 per cent for the Normal (Technical) course.

Those eligible for secondary school received option forms when they collected their result slips.

They will be able to access the online system to submit their secondary school choices up till next Wednesday.

The Secondary 1 posting results will be released on Dec 20.

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BATTLE-HARDENED

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WHAT MATTERS MOST

As long as he's happy and living well, which secondary school he goes to doesn't matter.

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MR SYLVIA TAY, on how her son Gerome's battle with lymphoma has given her a new perspective.

NEVER GIVE UP

Never. My parents always tell me to do my best. That's what they always do.

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LIM RUI ZE, when asked if he ever thought of giving up in the fight to recover from his illness