

He missed a year of school but managed to catch up



St Hilda's Secondary School student Caleb Lee was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in 2018, when he was in Secondary 2. He attained two distinctions out of six subjects for last year's O levels. ST PHOTO: JOEL CHAN

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When Caleb Lee was in Secondary 2 in 2018, he woke up one morning to jolts of pain in his thighs that were so excruciating his mother took him to a polyclinic.

He was referred that same day to KK Women's and Children's Hospital, where he was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia.

The St Hilda's Secondary School student told The Straits Times: "Everything went downhill so fast and I was warded immediately. When the doctor told my mother (the diagnosis), she came out of his office crying.

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"I thought: 'What did I do to deserve this?' I was also crestfallen because there was not much I could do to change my condition."

Chemotherapy was intense, and he was out of school for a year.

He returned to join his classmates in Secondary 3, and with the help of his teachers and the extra lessons they provided, was promoted to Secondary 4 last year.

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The 16-year-old was yesterday elated to find out that he had attained two distinctions out of six subjects.

"I am very happy with my results and grateful to everyone who has supported me in my journey," he said.

Caleb was hospitalised four to five days a week during the most intensive period of his treatment.

"(Before the diagnosis), I was actively participating in the student council. When I could not attend school for a year, I was lonely because I saw pictures of my friends in school on social media, but I was at the hospital or home," said Caleb, who has a 19-year-old sister.

His family, teachers and friends supported him throughout his recovery.

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This experience has also made me stronger and taught me to live my life with no regrets.

CALEB LEE, whose cancer has been in remission for the past four months.



Caleb was also determined to take the O-level exams with his classmates.

His teachers regularly organised home visits and sent him worksheets to help him catch up with his studies.

He also received extra help by attending the Children's Cancer Foundation's schooling programme, Place for Academic Learning and Support.

His cancer has been in remission for the past four months. He now hopes to follow in his mother's footsteps and become an accountant.

Caleb has secured a place in the Diploma in Accountancy and Finance programme at Temasek Polytechnic through the Early Admissions Exercise.

On what kept him motivated, he said: "Even though the journey was long and arduous, I always tried to be positive and know that this is part of life, which is full of ups and downs.

"This experience has also made me stronger and taught me to live my life with no regrets."

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