

PSLE no hurdle for visually-impaired Montfort pupil

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He began losing sight in his right eye towards the end of Pri 4. In Pri 5, he began to see clouded images in his left eye.

However, Joshua Babol did not want anyone to find out for fear of being treated differently. It was only when one of his teachers began to notice that his handwriting had begun to get illegible that Joshua admitted to having “clouded vision” in both eyes.

A failed eye test in his school, Montfort Junior School, also confirmed his fears. Further examinations at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) and other private clinics revealed to Joshua’s family that he had Leber’s Hereditary Optic Neuropathy (LHON), which leads to a loss of central vision.

Despite this, Joshua had a PSLE aggregate score of 212, achieving an A for Science and B for English and Mathematics.

But it was a struggle for him.

“It was really inconvenient for me [to lose most of my vision] and I didn’t feel comfortable telling anyone,” he recalled, adding that he often had misunderstandings with other students because they thought he was “pretending”.

It was also harder for Joshua to understand certain concepts in class due to his visual impairment and he took longer to complete his homework as a result.

“Even till today I still have some homework left incomplete,” Joshua said with a sheepish smile.

Said Joshua’s father James Babol, “It wasn’t easy for Joshua to go through what he did and I am really appreciate of the school for being so supportive and understanding.”

Mr Babol, who attends Mass at St Anne’s Church with his family, told Catholic News that Joshua was referred by SNEC to iC2 PrepHouse, a centre that teaches children with low vision coping skills in everyday living for them to be independent.

At the centre, Joshua learned to use a walking cane and was also introduced to a CCTV device which helps him to read and complete his work more conveniently.

The device works as a screen magnifier where any text or other object placed beneath the built-in camera is enlarged. At home, Joshua used the device to complete his homework as well as for revision.

At school, he had another similar device with an added function that helped him read texts from soft-copy documents. His teachers would help him by setting up the device daily before classes started.

On their part, Montfort Junior School supported Joshua by assigning classmates to walk with him in school.

During the PSLE, Joshua received twice the amount of time for each of his papers and had a scribe and reader assigned to him for his Mathematics and Science examinations.

Joshua, who enjoys playing Lego during his free time, shared that he was accepted into Montfort Secondary School and would be studying in the Express stream.

His advice to others going through challenges prior to their examinations, “Try your best to overcome your challenges and don’t give up. Work hard and you will slowly progress.”



Joshua Babol using the CCTV device, which works as a screen magnifier, to complete his homework as well as for revision.



Joshua with his younger brother Jaime Paul and father, Mr James Babol.