

Chi Chan - Class of 2002

Former Priory student Chi Chan has praised his education at school as he spearheads research into HIV-AIDS.

Chi was Head Boy while at Priory and said the encouragement of the science department has inspired him to dedicate his life to finding a cure for HIV-AIDS.

“The years I spent in Priory and in Preston has laid a solid foundation for my subsequent achievements and adventures,” said Chi. “I came from the then Portuguese colony of Macau in Southern China, with only a tenuous grasp of the English language. I arrived at the doors of Priory in 1997 with equal parts of hope and apprehension.

“From day one, the staff and pupils of Priory, as well as the wider community of Preston, treated my family and I as one of their own. It was within this nurturing environment that myself, my sister, and my cousins, all proud graduates of Priory, were able to achieve our full potential.

“One of my proudest moments in my life was to be elected Head Boy at Year 11 but my true passion lies in science, something I discovered in the labs and teacher’s offices at Priory.”

Chi completed his A-Levels at Runshaw College and then was accepted into St John’s College, University of Cambridge and obtained a degree in the Natural Sciences. He then moved to the University of Glasgow, completing a PhD in Virology.

“Soon after I handed in my doctoral thesis on retroviruses, I was hired as a Postdoctoral researcher by New York University to work on the molecular and cell biology of the AIDS virus, HIV-1. I spent four years there before moving onto the Frederick National Laboratory for Cancer Research in rural Maryland.

“At the moment I am living in Portland, Oregon as I work at one of the most prestigious medical research centres in the world, the Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute.

“I am currently working to improve our understanding of how HIV-1 causes disease at the tissue level. So far, I am co-author of 11 academic papers on the biology of HIV-1 and other viruses.

“Several of the projects that I am involved in are novel therapies that aim to cure HIV-AIDS, so that the spread of this disease can be halted and patients will no longer need to take antiviral drugs for the rest of their lives.”

As well as studying, Chi has met past presidents and future prime ministers and he has travelled around America.

“Nevertheless, I owe much of my success to the knowledge and life lessons I learned in Priory.”

