

Daniel Jiang's Journey at St John's:

From Dreams to Reality

The Beginning of Something Special: Since arriving at St John's College last July, I've embarked on an unforgettable learning journey that has completely transformed my perspective on education and life.

A Dream Takes Shape: Choosing to study in a completely unfamiliar place wasn't a random decision — it has been my dream since childhood. My parents have always valued international education and encouraged their children to become well-rounded individuals. It was both an opportunity and a challenge that I knew I had to embrace. I chose New Zealand because of its breathtaking landscapes and the genuine smiles on people's faces in countless photos I had seen online. But what truly sealed the deal was St John's College. While browsing their website, I came across Mr Shang Tong, Principal's powerful words: "At Saint John's College, we are '**Preparing Young Men For Life**.'" Seeing students showcase their talents and work alongside dedicated teachers, I felt an instant connection. What I loved most was how St John's spiritual foundation teaches students not just academic subjects, but how to become better people and use those values to make a positive impact on the world. That's why I was determined to study here.

First Steps Into a New World: Driven by curiosity and a willingness to embrace the unknown, I came to New Zealand with the support of my agent, BJ Educare, and stepped into the welcoming arms of the St John's College community. When I first arrived at my homestay, seeing the family waiting to welcome me was overwhelming in the best way possible. Even though English isn't my first language, I did my best to express my gratitude, and their warmth meant everything to me. After settling in, I stepped into school life, and while I was initially nervous, that anxiety quickly melted away. The students at St John's treated me like a brother from day one — helping me with assignments, explaining new concepts, and being genuinely supportive. Those after-school basketball games, daily handshakes, high-fives, and fist bumps made me realise something beautiful: St John's is a place with real heart, where everyone radiates genuine warmth and enthusiasm.

Facing the Challenges Head-On: With everyone's support, I adapted quickly, but it wasn't all smooth sailing. As someone learning English as a second language, I barely spoke in class at first. Understanding assignment requirements felt impossible at times, and even casual conversations with friends were challenging. These were real struggles for me. But I was

never truly alone in facing them. Teachers like Mrs Jackie Smith, Deputy Principal and Mr Edward Park, Dean of International Students were there every step of the way, helping me adapt to this new environment. After school, with the support of my agent, I've been receiving in-person coaching from Mrs Emily to strengthen my English. Through daily practice, I focused on improving my academic reading and writing, while my listening and speaking skills developed naturally through school life. This additional support has helped me not only stay on track with my current studies but also prepare more confidently for university-level entry. All the support didn't just improve my academic English — they gave me the confidence to truly engage with school life. I'm incredibly grateful to every single one of them. Through their passion and dedication, I felt the truth behind St John's motto: "At Saint John's College, we are 'Preparing Young Men For Life.'"

A Teacher Who Believed in Me: The most meaningful part of my time here has been working with my Year 13 Geography teacher, Miss Jane Healy. She's a kind-hearted teacher, and when I was struggling with the challenging Level 3 Geography, she never gave up on me. She sacrificed her morning tea breaks, lunch times, and even stayed after school — never worrying about her own time off, just pouring everything into helping me succeed. Completing those two major assignments together and seeing the excitement in her eyes when we finished was one of the most moving experiences of my life. Only someone who's been through it can understand how incredible that feeling of accomplishment really is. I was so lucky to have her, and without her unwavering support and patience, I never could have completed those challenging tasks.

Learning Beyond the Classroom: St John's has given me countless new experiences that have shaped who I'm becoming. They take learning outside the classroom walls — we're always studying in the library, but we also do geographical fieldwork where I can compare real data I've collected myself with scientific data. Instead of just memorising textbook answers, we analyse why differences occur. It's learning that actually matters. Beyond academics, attending the school ball was incredible — everyone dressed in formal wear, chatting and dancing together, releasing all our youthful energy while the music washed away every bit of stress and worry. In those moments, I caught a glimpse of my future self — mature and confident in a suit. Joining St John's basketball team taught me that teamwork is far more powerful than individual effort. Even when we lost games, my teammates would pat my shoulder and say, "Let's try again — don't be afraid of failure." That's when I realised I wasn't just part of a team anymore — I was their brother, and we were fighting for honour together.

Looking Forward: If I had to sum up my St John's experience in one sentence, it would be this: "Those who chase the light will eventually shine brilliantly themselves." My future will always be memorable because of the effort and determination I've put in here at St John's. For my next chapter, I hope to continue my studies at the University of Waikato — the university right next to St John's that I'm sure will bring me equally amazing experiences. But this time at St John's will be forever etched in my memory, filled with growth, fulfillment, and joy.

A Message to Future Students: Finally, I want to encourage any international students reading my story to come and experience this life for yourselves. Dive in completely, and you'll discover experiences unlike anything else. St John's will help you recognise your own worth and potential, just like their motto promises: "At Saint John's College, we are 'Preparing Young Men For Life.'"

Here's to our future!

PEACE.

Daniel