Alexander starts school just months after undergoing fifth surgery

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A little boy who's undergone five major surgeries since he was born is packing his school bag and getting ready to start primary school.

Four year old Alexander Pickering, from Little Clacton, was born at Colchester Hospital when a nurse discovered he had an imperforated anus, a life-threatening condition that occurs in just one in 5,000 babies. At just a few hours old, Alexander was rushed to The Royal London Children's Hospital for emergency lifesaving treatment in which a colostomy was created to pass waste in the absence of an anal opening. Alexander remained at the hospital for a week, during which time his parents, Kiera and Mark Pickering, were supported with free 'Home from Home' accommodation at its Stevenson House.

Since his first procedure, Alexander has undergone four further surgeries at The Royal London Hospital, and each time his parents have been supported by The Sick Children's Trust. Despite undergoing his latest surgery in June, Alexander is raring to go and join his big brothers at Engaines Primary School in Little Clacton this September. **Mum Kiera says:**

"Alexander is really looking forward to starting school because he wants to be a 'big boy' like his brothers! For months, he's been telling us that he is getting taller and asking whether if he is big enough to go to school yet.

"Starting school is a huge milestone for us. As the big day approaches, Mark and I have been reflecting on our son's journey and feel so grateful that we have been able to be with Alexander throughout all of his treatment because of The Sick Children's Trust. We live 70 miles away from where Alexander's treatment has taken place, and knowing we had Stevenson House meant we never felt too far away. We'd like to say a special thank you to The Sick Children's Trust for keeping us by our son's hospital bedside throughout his treatment.

"We are very nervous about Alexander starting school in September because of his bowel problems which have resulted from his bottom being surgically created. But he is so strong we know that he will take school in his stride and do what he does best!"

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital with free, high quality accommodation just minutes from their loved one's hospital bedside. Although the accommodation is provided free of charge to families, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Assistant Stevenson House Manager, Irma Cambron, says:**

"I would like to say a huge congratulations to Alexander for graduating from nursery!

"It's always a pleasure to hear from families who The Sick Children's Trust has supported and see their children growing up with big smiles on their faces. We wish Alexander the best of luck with big school!"

For further information about The Sick Children's Trust, please visit http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/

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