Boy not expected to live past ten days old starts school for first time

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A little boy who was not expected to live past ten days old has defied doctors' expectations to start school this September.

After being diagnosed with an extremely rare heart condition while in the womb, when he was born Flynn's parents were told surgery was the only option to keep him alive. The condition - hypoplastic right heart syndrome - meant the right side of his heart hadn't developed properly and left him in critical condition just hours after birth. The doctors said that without surgery, he would not live past ten days, but there was only a 50% chance that he would survive open heart surgery.

Despite the prognosis, Flynn beat the odds, but had to have two major heart operations before his first birthday at Leeds Children's Hospital – over 60 miles away from home in Hull.

Thankfully Flynn could have his Mum Stef Westmorland and Dad Maxwell Brown by his side as The Sick Children's Trust provided them with free 'Home from Home' accommodation at Eckersley House.

Sick Children's Trust Ambassador Stef says: "When Flynn went in for his first operation, the doctors said without the heart surgery he wouldn't make it past ten days old.

"At that time we couldn't think about the future. We didn't think about Flynn saying his first word or taking his first steps, let alone his first day of school.

"Seeing how far he's come amazes us. We're a very positive and optimistic family and I'm so excited to wave him off at the school gates, but also a little nervous.

"Flynn is absolutely thriving, he's a very happy and cheeky little boy, and after an action packed holiday in Centre Parcs with his Mum, Dad and sister Elsie he is all the more ready to start school. He has his little school bag ready; he can't wait for his uniform to arrive and is looking forward to making new friends."

Flynn's journey isn't over as he still needs a further heart operation in January next year. The family will travel back to Leeds General Infirmary, where they hope to be supported by The Sick Children's Trust once again.

Stef continues: "The Sick Children's Trust gave us such vital support at a time we thought we could lose our baby. The free accommodation at Eckersley House meant we were just minutes from Flynn's hospital bedside so we could be with him 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We could focus solely on helping our son get better. We will never be able to thank the charity enough."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country supporting around 4,000 families with seriously ill children in hospital each year.

Eckersley House Manager, Jane McHale says: "It is wonderful to see Flynn starting school after what was such a tough start to life. But seeing how he fought his way through that first year, we know school won't be a big challenge for him.

"The Sick Children's Trust helps families from all over the UK who have to travel miles to get their loved ones life-saving treatment. When your child is so seriously ill, it's an incredibly difficult time. Eckersley House - along with the charity's other 'Homes from Home' - helps ease some of those worries by keeping families together."

**Flynns family are supporting The Sick Children's Trust's annual Pyjama Party, happening Monday 17 October to Friday 21 October where children are sponsored to come to nursery, playgroup and school dressed in their favourite pyjamas and take part in various activities.*

For more information on The Sick Children's Trust, please visit: www.sickchildrenstrust.org**.**

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