Boy who was predicted never to walk or talk starts school for first time

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The mum of a little boy who was told her son would never walk or talk shed tears of joy last month as she watched him set off for school.

Jake Holland, four, from Gateshead, has proven all his doctors wrong by pulling on his school sweater, packing his bag and stepping through the school gates for the first time.

Despite the devastating diagnosis at birth, and being predicted to need round-the-clock care, Jake has started reception and is taking on school in all its glory. The brave youngster, who is reliant on a catalogue of medication, is tube-fed, has cystic fibrosis and global developmental delay, is not letting his condition hold him back and is striving to be the best pupil in his class. **Sick Children's Trust Ambassador, mum Amanda Holland, says:**

"I was so nervous about Jake going to school but he's settled in really well. He absolutely loves school, so much so that some days he just doesn't want to leave.

"Jake is my inspiration. He gives me hope every day because the odds were so firmly set against him, but my little boy has proven that he can do anything he sets his mind to. He's walking and talking – things he was never expected to do – what could be more inspirational than that?

"And despite still having lots of health complications, and still spending so much time in hospital he never lets it get him down."

Throughout Jake's treatment, Amanda has been supported by The Sick Children's Trust's Crawford House at the RVI in Newcastle, alongside Jake's brothers David, 5, and one-year-old Jermaine. **Amanda continues:**

"When Jake's had long spells of treatment at the RVI we've always been comforted to know we have a 'Home from Home' at Crawford House. Crawford House supports families like mine with seriously ill children undergoing treatment at the RVI. It is free accommodation run by The Sick Children's Trust and it has been a massive support and has helped my entire family. Crawford House has meant Jake hasn't been separated from me or his brothers at all during all his years of hospital visits."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital. Crawford House has 23 family bedrooms each with a direct telephone line to the wards; it also has communal bathrooms, living rooms and laundry facilities for families to use. **Crawford House Manager, Gail Stonley, says:**

"We love hearing updates from Amanda about how Jake is doing – and it is incredible to see how far he's come. He really has amazed everyone around him, and we are all just so proud of the little man he's become.

"We are so pleased that we've been able to support Amanda and her family when Jake's been poorly. Although our 'Homes from Home' are free to families with seriously ill children, it costs us £30 to support a family for one night. To help continue the running of our ten 'Homes from Home', from October 17 we are inviting people to join in our Pyjama Party, where children are sponsored to go into nursery, playgroup or school dressed in their favourite pair of pyjamas. It's not just for children though – adults can get involved too! If you'd like to find out more, please email fundraising@sickchildrenstrust.org."

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

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