Twin survives heart surgery to start school this September!

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A twin who has undergone two major heart surgeries since he was born is excited to start school for the very first time this September with his brother.

Four year old non-identical twins Nicholas and Jonathan, from Sheffield, were born prematurely at 33 weeks at Leeds General Infirmary (LGI). The older twin, Nicholas, was born with a congenital heart defect, transposition of the great arteries, where the two main blood vessels leaving the heart (the pulmonary artery and the aorta) are swapped over. This means that two separate circuits are formed; one that circulates oxygen-poor blood from the body back to the body, and another that recirculates oxygen-rich blood from the lungs back to the lungs, causing low oxygen levels.

As a result, Nicholas has undergone two major heart surgeries one at just hours old and another at two years old to insert an artificial tube to reroute the blood flow to his heart. Despite this, Nicholas and his brother Jonathan will be popping on their school uniforms and starting Westways Primary School this September. **Dad Roger Wareing says:**

“Nicholas and Jonathan have got a real thirst for knowledge, so they’re very excited to be starting school. They’ve seen all the new toys they’ll get to play with there, and Nicholas is particularly excited by the train tracks. They know that things will be different at school, like having to put up their hands to ask questions, but they’re really looking forward to starting. It’s a time of real excitement for us.”

Throughout his hospital treatment, Nicholas’ family have been supported by The Sick Children’s Trust with free accommodation at Eckersley House, located just minutes from his bedside. The charity supports families with seriously ill children in hospital across its ten ‘Homes from Home’ accommodation nationwide. **Mum Mary says:**

“Eckersley House was fantastic and made a huge difference. It really helped keep a sense of normality in our family when we were so far from home.

“Nicholas will continue to go to LGI for annual check-ups and will need another surgery at seven or eight years old when the artificial tubing needs to be replaced by a bigger one. We hope to be able to be supported by Eckersley House then, especially as Jonathan will be older and want to stay with us and be included in the process.

“Although the twins are close, they have really developed their own personalities and interests. Jonathan is the more gregarious of the two and is the one to run up to other children first, while Nicholas tends to observe and wait before making decisions. Nicholas is very keen on building, engineering and jigsaws, whereas Jonathan is more interested in words, language and music! Even though they like to do different things, they’re always looking round to see what the other one is doing!”

The Sick Children’s Trust relies entirely on voluntary donations to keep its ‘Homes from Home’ running. Every year the charity supports around 4,000 families with seriously ill children in hospital, and it costs £30 to provide a family with accommodation for one night. **Jane McHale, Eckersley House Manager, says:**

“We are so delighted to hear that Nicholas is doing so well and looking forward to starting school with his brother Jonathan. We wish him the best of luck in the future!”

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

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