Gareth Bale at The Noah's Ark Children's Hospital for Wales, Cardiff. From left, Cian's sister Bethany, mum Lorraine, brother Dylan, Gareth Bale and Cian's dad Richard, with Cian at the front

Cian with some of his toys in hospital

Cian Case pictured before his diagnoses with the match trophy following a game with his club Llanharan RFC

Cian gets surprise visit for Christmas

FOR little Cian Case, Christmas was always going to be different than for the majority of other four-year-old boys.

Unlike most children, brave Cian, is spending the festive break at Cardiff's University of Wales hospital as he battles against the cancerous spinal and brain tumours he was diagnosed with earlier this month.

It is only the beginning of a long journey for the Case family, who moved to the area from Manchester in 2011, with Cian facing up to eight months of intensive chemotherapy and radiotherapy to ease his symptoms and hopefully beat the disease that threatens his life.

Cian, a pupil at Llanharan Primary School, is in constant pain and has undergone surgery to remove the majority of a tumour that was only found to be growing on his spine after he went to the doctor complaining of stomach pains barely a month ago.

He has also been told "seeds" of the cancer have impregnated his brain.

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The surgery resulted in Cian losing all feeling below his waist, with doctors pessimistic over his long-term mobility despite the fact he has gained some sensation.

It is a grim predicament, but Cian's family, from Llanharan, have done everything in their power to make sure this Christmas is still one filled with magic.

And they were helped on their way by a surprise visit from a global football star that left sports-mad Cian and the family stunned on Christmas Eve.

Gareth Bale, along with his partner Emma Rhys-Jones, shocked staff and patients when they arrived on Christmas Eve afternoon to dish out gifts to Cian and some of the other children.

Cian's dad Richard, who is originally for Merthyr Tydfil, said: "Most of the VIP visits to the ward over Christmas were pre-planned and we were aware of who would be arriving at any given point, but Gareth turning up on Christmas Eve was a total shock.

Cian and mum Lorraine

"I was in my scruffs as we were just preparing to bath Cian ready to get him into his new PJs and the arrival of Santa.

"If I had known of Gareth's visit I would have at least been wearing my Wales shirt, which I'd only changed a half hour earlier.

"There was no media accompanying him, so you could tell it was a gesture that he wanted to perform rather than feeling obliged to.

"Gareth was genuinely interested in Cian and his condition and gave him a Spiderman present for Christmas.

"He was also happy to pose for a photo with the family, which his lovely girlfriend volunteered to take."

Following Bale's visit, Cian's family – mum Lorraine, a marketing manager at Eversheds LLP law firm, Richard, sister Bethany and brother Dylan, – were all allowed to stay in Cian's hospital room on Christmas Eve night so they could all wake up together on Christmas morning.

Richard said: "Although you would never choose to spend Christmas at hospital, the nurses on Rainbow Ward did everything to make it as special at possible.

"Cian didn't have the strength to open all his presents on Christmas Day, but hopefully he will feel a bit better soon to enjoy the rest."

Cian's parents are writing a blog in his name to promote awareness of his condition. You can follow his story at www.ciansstory.uk

Richard, who works for the UK Government within the Home Office in Science and Technology, said: "Myself and Lorraine would like to thank our employers for their support and understanding; our friends and family for their offers of help and assistance; the village of Llanharan for welcoming us into their community; the charities who are assisting Cian and the family; the staff at Noah's Ark Children's Hospital for their exceptional care; and everyone who have generously donated or are taking part in the many fundraising initiatives organised by friends.

"We want to raise awareness of Cian's condition, hoping it will encourage research into new treatments and potential cures."

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