

Sample Letter to introduce your child to Prep class – the first year of school. This was developed by Lee George with thanks to members before her who provided similar samples.



Hi,

My name is _____ and I have Albinism. Your Mum and Dad might know this better as being 'albino', although I don't really like being called that because Albinism is just a small part of who I am. I wanted to explain Albinism to all my Foundation friends to explain why I do things a little differently to you sometimes.

Albinism is a genetic condition (this means it came from both of my parents) and I am one of only 1,200 people with Albinism in Australia – pretty cool huh!! Having Albinism means that I didn't get any melanin (the thing that gives colour to your hair, skin and eyes) and I sunburn very easily. Some people think that people with Albinism have red eyes, but we don't! I have blue eyes and super cool white hair. The bright light and sunshine can hurt my eyes so you will see me wearing cool sunnies and a hat outside and lots of sunscreen.

Albinism also causes vision impairment which means I can't see as well as you. I wear glasses to help me see better, but even with those on I find it very tricky to see things. I can only really see clearly to about 1 metre. This means that if you stand too far away from me I won't see your face and may not know who you are. Once I get to know you better I will learn to recognise your voice so if you can call out to me to let me know where you are then that would help me a lot.

I need to get very close to people and things like books to see them better. Sometimes I will hold the book right up to my eyes to tell what is on the page. If I get up really close to your face please don't be worried I am just trying to check out who you are.

It's difficult to explain how I see or what I see but things look pretty fuzzy like they are out of focus. I would be grateful if you could come and introduce yourself to me. It is very confusing when I go into the playground, it is hard to work out where my friends are when you are all running around, especially in the same uniform. Everyone can look the same and I find it tricky to find my friends so if you could call out to me "Jasper I am over near the red slide" or invite me to play that would be great.

I use a slant board on my desk so I don't get a sore neck from trying to get close enough to see my drawing or reading. You might see me using a magnifier or special TV screen to make the

words on the whiteboard easier to see – **I like to have things in big print like this.** Sometimes it is easiest for me to have my own copy of the book during story time to get close enough to see the page, please don't get upset if I don't want to share, sharing a book can be hard when you need to get really close to it.

You probably won't notice that I am vision impaired because I run, jump and play just as well as all my friends and I can even see very tiny things if they are really really close to me. Sometimes I

might seem clumsy and fall over things or run into people, but I still join in because I love to be involved just like all the kids.

If you are standing with a window or sun behind you I'll probably just see a shadow. If I am looking for something, please don't tell me it's "over there" because I can't see to the other side of the room like you. "Near the reading corner" or "Charlie is on the yellow slide" or "the pencils are on the shelf next to the door" would be really helpful.

Steps and slopes can be difficult for me to see and sometimes it helps if you show me where these are. Once I know my way around I am fine.

Sometimes I might come up and seem to jump into a game and say or do the wrong thing. I just want to join in like all of you, but find it hard to work out what you are doing and sometimes who you are. If you could gently explain your game to me so I don't make mistakes that would make me very happy.

You might have noticed that my eyes shake a lot – this is called Nystagmus – it doesn't hurt my eyes or make me feel dizzy, but it does make it difficult for me to try to focus on things and can make me feel quite tired too.

One of the hardest things for me is social interactions. I can't see how you are feeling so I need you to use words – it's difficult for me to see if you are frowning or smiling at me. If you wave at me and I don't answer I'm not being rude, I just haven't seen you. I also can't tell if you are talking to me in a group so you can help me by saying my name first so I know to pay attention.

Most of all I am just like you – excited to start school, make lots of new friends and all the fun things we are going to do this year. I love Hot Wheels cars, running around and playing with friends in the playground (especially on the slides). I am looking forward to a great year with you.

If you would like to know more about Albinism or have any questions then my Mum is happy to talk to you, her number is

Thanks for reading.

(Child's name).