

Anna's first day at school

It was a very special day for Anna. Today was her first day at school. She cleaned her teeth, got dressed in her new school uniform and brushed her hair.

Anna started to walk to school with her mum. She had butterflies in her tummy. She knew that something about her was different to the other children, the doctor in the hospital had told her all about it. He had told her a big word, which was 'Coloboma'. He told Anna and her mum that it meant that her pupils (the black bits in the middle of her eyes) are a different shape to other peoples - more like an upside-down pear than a circle. It also meant that bright light hurt Anna's eyes sometimes, and she had to get close to things to see them clearly.

The more she thought about it, the more Anna worried that she would be the odd one out. She knew her eyes looked different and was worried that the other children might not want to be her friend. What if she couldn't find anyone to play with in the playground?

Anna's dad told her that she should tell her new classmates all about her eyes. She should say that her eyes were made that way inside her mum's tummy. He told her; 'Everyone has something different about them. You'll find out soon enough.'

Anna walked up to the gates and met her teacher, Miss Ali. Miss Ali had been to Anna's house last week for a visit, to tell her all about starting school. She knew all about her eyes, and she knew all about

her butterflies. 'Come in, Anna', Miss Ali smiled. 'Come and meet your new friends'.

Anna gave her mum a big kiss goodbye and walked into the classroom where all the other children were sitting on the carpet. She sat at the back where they could not see her very well. She felt a bit scared.

Miss Ali asked all the children to sit in a circle on the carpet.

'Now', said her new teacher, 'Let's go around the circle and tell everybody our names. You can tell the other children something special about you, if you'd like to'.

One of the boys, Charlie, went first, and he told everybody that he loved football. A little girl called Priyanka told the class that she loved dancing. Another little boy, Stepan, was sitting in a special chair with wheels. He told the class that his legs were poorly, so he needed help sometimes, and that he loved drawing. The other children smiled.

Suddenly, Anna felt very brave. She told all her new friends about her what the doctor said about her eyes and Coloboma. She told them that she needed help sometimes, too - like if she couldn't see where her friends were in the playground, or if she couldn't find something in the classroom. Miss Ali would also make sure that the letters in her reading books were big enough for her to see. 'Who will help Anna, if she needs it?' asked Miss Ali. All of the children put their hands in the air! Anna felt happy.

"Oh," said Anna, "and I almost forgot. I love singing - especially songs from my favourite TV show".

After that, the children played in the sand and in the water. Later, Anna needed help to find a tiny lego brick, and Priyanka found it for her. She told Anna, 'I think we should be friends', and Anna smiled a big smile. In the playground, Anna was happy to find out that Priyanka liked the same TV programme as her, and they sang the song together. Anna loved school.