

Dear Teacher,

I am a child with arthritis and I would like you to know more about me. There are a lot of kids like me, but it is possible that because we are spread out all over New Zealand you may never have had a child with arthritis in your class before. There are some important things about me that I want to share with you. Sometimes I really hurt, even though there isn't anything wrong with me that you can see, so if I am quiet or withdrawn, it doesn't mean that I am not interested in school. Mornings can be a problem because my joints can be stiff for the first few hours after I get up and sometimes by late afternoon I feel tired. A lot of the time I feel really good, but when the arthritis becomes active, I usually feel pretty uncomfortable for a period of time. I hope this will explain why I have up days and down days.

I want to be in school whenever I can because I know that it is important for my education. I also want to be involved in as many activities and parts of school as I can. Sometimes it might be necessary to work out some special arrangements for me. I can't always take part in the regular playground or physical education programmes. Sometimes I have a problem if the distance to activities is too great, or if I have to stand too long. I may need to take my tablets during school time, because that is a very important part of my treatment for arthritis. Once in a while I may need to leave school to see the doctor or go for physiotherapy treatments. I hope you will have a meeting with me and my parents early in the school year, so that we can all understand each other better. My Mum and Dad will let you know if there are major changes in my condition during the year that you should know about.

I have the same needs for achievement and success as all kids do. So I want you to have the same expectations for me that you do for all the other children. I may be a little slow or awkward, but I can do the same things the other kids do if you will just let me take my time. If I can't finish my work in time, please let me take home my assignment to finish instead of excusing me on the grounds that I have a disability.

Thanks for letting me tell you a little about myself. If you have any other questions, please don't hesitate to ask me or my parents.