Bella Bear
Now I Am Four
Hello. I’m Bella’s Mummy. Remember me from the Bella Bear: Our New Baby book?

Well, Bella is starting her new school in September. I cannot believe that our baby has grown up so quickly, becoming so independent and whizzing around in her bright yellow wheelchair – everyone knows when Bella is nearby!

We have learnt together, worked together, laughed together and sometimes cried together, but most importantly we have done new and exciting things together. Now Bella wants to write her own book and share her stories with other children who have spina bifida.

With love from Bella Bear to:

Bella x

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Hello. I am Bella. I am a lively four year old with lots of energy, who loves learning new and exciting things.

I know Mummy told you all about me when I was a baby. I will be starting my new school in September. I want to share my own stories and adventures with you. I love spending time with my best friend Amy, and I love swimming too. Oh, and by the way, did I say, I have spina bifida too?

New school, swimming and best friends too
If I can do it, so can YOU!
In September, I am starting school. I am sooooo excited.

I went to the school last week for a ‘taster day’ with lots of other children.

Mummy explained what a ‘taster day’ is. It is a chance to have a look around the new school and meet our teachers. My new teacher is called Mrs Smith.

The classroom was lovely and bright and the doorway was wide enough for my yellow wheelchair to go through. There was a table with plenty of room for my wheelchair and enough space for my friends to sit too. I asked Mrs Smith if Amy could sit by me when we started school in September. She said, ‘Yes, of course she can!’ I was sooo happy.

My Occupational Therapist has already visited the school and has decided on all the things I need to make my school day easier. I will have a yellow foot rest and there will be a special space at the back of the classroom for my walking frame.

Classrooms, teachers, taster days too
If I can do it, so can you!
When I start school in September, I will have a Learning Support Assistant – known as the LSA. I met my LSA at the taster day. She is called Wendy.

Wendy will help me learn. She will help me understand what my teacher asks me to do. She will help me get about the school with my walking frame or in my wheelchair. She will show me where everything is in school. She will help me when I need to go to the toilet.

There is a ‘special’ toilet in the school. It is big enough to hold my wheelchair. There are handrails if I need to hold on to something as I sometimes find it hard to balance when I stand. Mummy says she will give Wendy my catheter, wet wipes, and everything else I need to go to the toilet. I think that is a good idea so I will never have to worry about going to the toilet without my Mummy.

Meeting Wendy, getting around school and the special toilet too
If I can do it, so can you!
Half way through the taster day, a bell rang really loudly. It was so loud, it made me jump.

Wendy said, ‘That bell means it’s time for lunch’. She took me to the lunch hall.

Everyone had brought a packed lunch. We were all so noisy and excited. It was just like having a giant Benny Bear’s picnic in the lunch hall. Mummy had made me cheese sandwiches with some carrot and celery sticks. I had some strawberries and a small yoghurt for my pudding. Yum yum! Delicious!

After lunch, we were allowed to go out to play. There was a big playground and an even bigger playing field.

Noisy bells, and yummy lunch too
If I can do it, so can you!
Wendy came with me to make sure that I could get around. She asked me if I wanted to use my walking frame to go out to play because, like lots of other little children with spina bifida, I sometimes use my walking frame instead of my wheelchair. It just depends on where I am and what I am doing.

As it was my first ever time in the playground, I wanted to use my wheelchair. I pushed myself out through the double doors, down the ramp and went to find my best friend Amy.

We had lots of fun. The playground was flat and easy for me to get around. We played games for a while and then decided to go onto the playing field.

The big playing field was a bit more tricky for my wheelchair so Wendy went to get my walking frame. Amy walked with me to a nice shady spot. We sat down and Amy taught me how to make a daisy chain. It was so pretty. I put it safely in my pocket as a present for Mummy.

Lunch and play and daisy chains too
If I can do it, so can you!
The bell rang again. That was the end of playtime. It was also the end of the taster day, so it was time to go home. Mummy came to pick me up. I couldn’t wait to tell her everything!

I was sooooo excited because I had met my new teacher, Mrs Smith. I had met my new LSA, Wendy. I knew where my new classroom was. I had played in the playground. I had made some new friends and best of all ... Mrs Smith had promised that Amy could sit next to me when we start school in September. Hurray!

Now I know that starting school won’t be scary at all.

**Taster days, lots of new friends too**

*If I can do it, so can you!*
Mummy says ever since my ‘taster day’ last week, I seem to be so grown up and so much more confident. **Confident** means that I have started to try new things… like swimming.

Mummy put my name down for swimming lessons ages ago and I had my first lesson last Sunday. I loved it.

When we got to the pool, Mummy and I went to the toilet first. Mummy helped me use my catheter so I could have a wee before going into the pool. Then we went into a changing room big enough for both of us. Mummy helped me to put on some swimming pants (just in case!) and my favourite yellow swimming costume.

Mummy helped me walk to the side of the pool with my walking frame. I was a little nervous but Mummy said she would be watching from the poolside. She promised to listen to what my swimming instructor was telling me so we could practise on our own.
Swimming is fun, and good exercise too
If I can do it, so can you!
I’m Bella. I may only be four years old, but I am so proud of all the things I can do.

I love to learn and I love to try new and exciting things.

Oh, and by the way, did I say, I have spina bifida too.

**Best friends, new things and great fun too**

**If I can do it, so can you!**

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Some of Bella’s words you may not have heard before:

**Catheter:** or Wiggly Wee Tube - a special tube to drain ‘wee’ from the bladder

**Learning Support Assistant (LSA):** someone who will help you in your class or school

**Occupational Therapist (OT):** a person who helps you find useful ways or things, such as a walking frame, so that you can join in with your friends at school and at home

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Have you seen the other book about Bella Bear?

**Bella Bear: Our New Baby**

Bella’s mummy tells the story of Bella’s arrival and early days as a much longed for baby bear
This is a story about a special bear with Spina Bifida. Lots of girls and boys have Spina Bifida. Perhaps you have too?