

I would like to take this opportunity to give you some information about the rare skin condition that my daughter, *Child's Name*, was born with. This is old news for some; however, many of you are not aware so I feel it is worth repeating. You may find your child coming home to ask you questions about her “mark” or visible difference and I want to provide some tips on how you can answer those questions and also alleviate any fears you or your child may have.

Her condition is known as CMN – short for Congenital Melanocytic Naevi. It is essentially a giant mole that covers 60% of her back and runs down her legs, buttocks and stomach. She also has over a hundred smaller CMN, just like moles all over. The CMN is normally not visible when she is fully clothed, but they will be while she gets changed for ballet (and for swimming by next year in Reception) and/or if she wears a leotard with no tights. The skin is “mole-like” – dark brown, hairy and lumpy. It is a large birthmark -- not contagious and it does not hurt her.

It is normal for young children to comment or ask about a child’s visible difference. They may point, try to touch or pinch birthmarks or shy away from a child with a skin condition. We realize that there is no intention to be rude at this age, nevertheless, what they say can come out bluntly or in exclamations of shock, surprise or dislike. Your reaction to your child’s curiosity will be crucial to the way the child will come to feel about visible differences – in others and/or in themselves. The ideal way to handle this is to address your child’s queries directly rather than try to ignore them or appear flustered. By giving a simple explanation, you can encourage your child to feel comfortable with differences. You will satisfy their curiosity, provide them with just enough information to alleviate any uncertainty and help promote the idea that Pascale’s disfigurement is just one part of who she is. Here are some example phrases:

“It’s just a birthmark that doesn’t hurt her.”

“It’s her special mark that she was born with.”

“It’s her giant mole. Most people have moles – hers is just very large.”

Having mentioned the CMN, then move the conversation along naturally and in an appropriate way – “What did you have for lunch today?”; “Can you please find your fruit box?”; “Where are your moles?”.

I have information leaflets which I would be happy to hand out should you wish to have a copy. Further info about the condition can be found at our charity support group website www.caringmattersnow.co.uk . Should you have any other questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to me directly. Thanks in advance for taking the time to read this lengthy email and for your support in promoting acceptance, tolerance and diversity at *School's Name*.

Regards,