

A story of embryo donation

Dave and Jenny and their embryo donation conceived daughter Marianne have been Network members for some time and Marianne has attended the Children's Workshop we hold at the national meetings.

Recently Jenny emailed to say that they could not attend an event we were holding in London because Marianne, now age 11, was starting a new school and they wanted a quiet weekend at home before that happened.

This week, Jenny emailed again –

Hello Olivia,

I just wanted to tell you that Marianne has settled into the new school very well and in fact they have been studying reproduction in Science...Marianne chose to tell her teacher (who is also her Form Teacher) about her donor conception and subsequently took in her books to share with them. I received a note home in her planner this week to say that Marianne had spoken to her class group about this and that the group had been interested and asked sensible questions!

I am thrilled that she feels confident to share her information in this way and think we must have got something right somewhere. I am also pleased and relieved that she has received such a positive response from teachers and peers. We did not tell the school in advance about her conception, feeling that it is now her information, although the topic has arisen much more quickly than I had anticipated! We really are very proud of her.

Just thought I would share this with you because it is you and the Network that have helped us to proceed as we have done thus far and it seems to be working, so thank you so much.

Kind regards

Jenny

In the office Olivia and Nina were reduced to tears on reading this but managed to email Jenny back to ask permission to reprint the message in the Journal.

Jenny responded by agreeing to the reproduction and added –

I forgot to say that at the conclusion of the teacher's message home she said that the class had all agreed that Marianne was *very special*. How lovely. The teacher apparently had tears in her eyes when she read our version of Our Story (written and beautifully illustrated by Dave and Jenny), complete with pictures, and now Marianne wants to add a new one of herself in her new uniform.

Of course it has brought new questions about full and half siblings and the identity of the donors, and fairness/unfairness of anonymity, but Marianne seems

very comfortable with what we have been able to tell her and accepts that we have shared all we know at this stage.

I expect we will come to the meeting in March as I think she will get a lot from it if there is another Children's Workshop running, and soon after that – she will be 12 in April – she could join the Young Person's Group if she wants. During various discussions that took place in school last week, her Head of Year asked whether Marianne 'minded' about this and she said that as she had always known she didn't really think about it, but she loves her Mummy and Daddy. Gulp!

Jenny

Olivia adds...of course Marianne is likely to have a range of feelings about her conception and the identity of her donors as she grows and changes, but knowing about her origins from the beginning and the warm and open relationship she has with her parents will hopefully protect her from the sense of loss and emotional distress suffered by some donor conceived people.