

## 'Suicide pact' girl's parents tell of bully hell

A TEENAGE girl who died in an suspected suicide pact with a friend was driven out of her school by bullies, her devastated parents said today.

Laura Rhodes, 13, was discovered at her home in Neath, south Wales, on Saturday after taking a suspected overdose with her best friend, Rebecca Ling, who she met in an internet chatroom.

As Rebecca, 14, from Birmingham, recovered in hospital after the ordeal, police yesterday ruled out bullying as a factor in Laura's death.

But her grieving parents, Yvonne and Michael, today spoke out to "put the record straight" and insisted Laura was extensively bullied.

Still too upset to speak themselves, Laura's cousin Mandy Birt and her aunt Jackie Thomas read out a statement from her parents.

They said Laura had suffered a "small amount" of bullying at her primary school which had been effectively dealt with at the time. She then went on to Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School where the problem apparently grew much worse.

"Laura was bullied extensively at Cefn Saeson School," her parents said. "We did try to tackle these issues with the relevant authorities but to no avail."

The "official line" was that there was no real problem and that Laura had been made to feel that she was responsible for it by not ignoring it, they said. Mr and Mrs Rhodes added that Laura and the family had been threatened with prosecution if she failed to regularly attend school.

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<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=519&id=1054082004>

### **Bullying at school:**

<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=519>

### **Websites:**

Anti-bullying network

<http://www.antibullying.net/>

ChildLine

<http://www.childline.org.uk/>