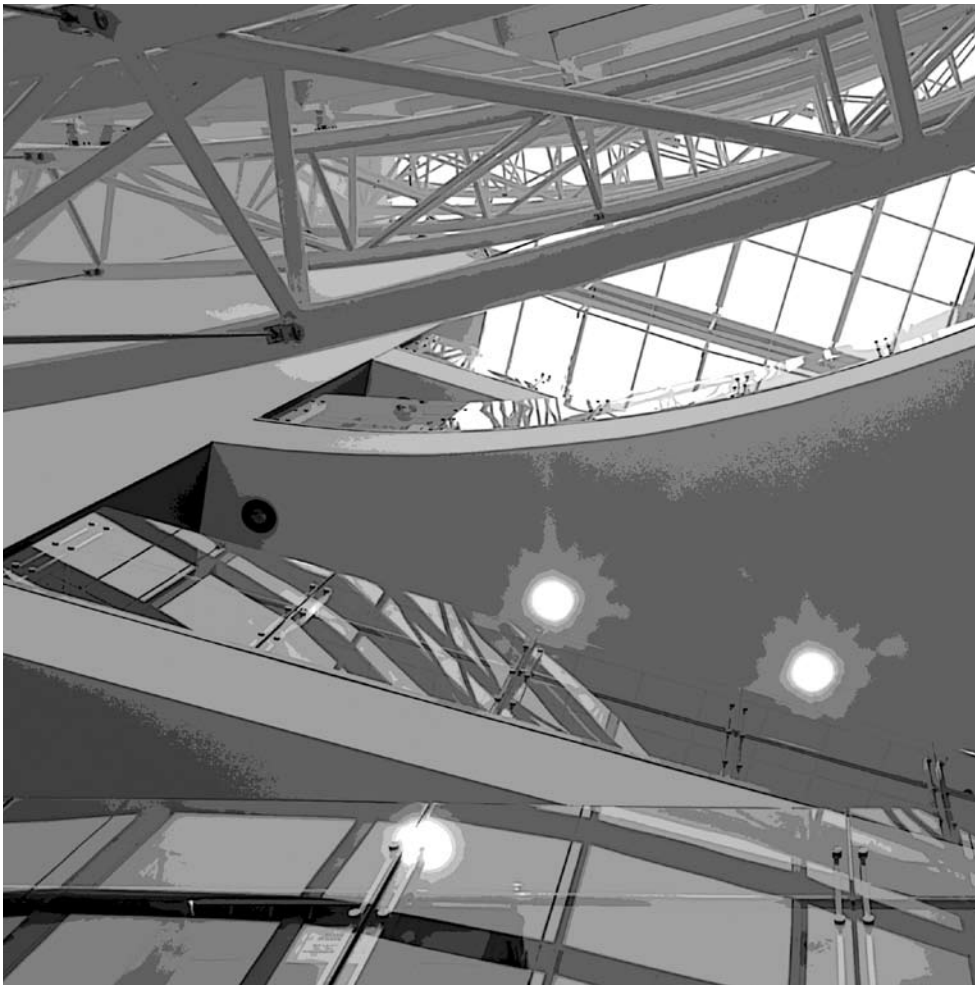


The Spires Cleft Centre

# Bullying and Teasing

Guide for parents and carers



Worries about teasing and bullying are very common amongst many parents and children; anxieties can be even higher if you fear there is something that will mark your child out as 'different' in any way. Having a cleft doesn't automatically mean that your child will be bullied, and most young people with a cleft have plenty of friends and enjoy their time at school.

However, as for all children, there can be more difficult times with bullying. We hope the advice in this leaflet will be useful to parents or young people who are worried about bullying, and help you get the support necessary to stop it becoming a problem.

Teasing is part of most children's normal experience in the playground. However, name calling can get out of hand, and turn into nasty taunting. If the teasing is happening frequently or persistently, or the child is feeling hurt or upset, it is no longer 'a bit of fun' and must be stopped.

Bullying can be physical, but it can also be more subtle (less obvious), such as leaving a child out or spreading rumours about them. Bullies pick on people for any number of reasons, just as long as they get a **reaction**.

## What can I do to support my child?

### **Reassurance**

Children can find it difficult to tell their parents or teachers that they are being bullied, often because they are worried that the bullies will find out and make life even worse. If your child does bring up problems at school, reassure them that you will help to sort out the problem and they were right to tell you. It is important that you remain calm so that your child realises that you aren't going to make the situation worse for them. Don't promise to keep it a secret, but discuss and agree with your child a plan of action.

### **Making New Friends**

Many young people go through difficult phases with friendships. Having different groups of friends (e.g. from home, school, scouts, music or sports clubs etc.) can be very helpful because even if your

child is going through a tricky patch with one set of friends, they have others to remind them that they are still likeable and able to have good friendships.

For young people who find making friends more difficult, structured activities outside of school with adult supervision, such as a martial art or drama group, can be less scary ways of getting to know new people.

### **School Policy**

All schools must have an anti-bullying policy by law. You will understandably feel upset and angry that your child has been bullied while at school, but if you can develop a good working relationship with them, this will help to sort out the situation.

Your child may have ideas about who they like and trust from the teaching staff. If they don't, making an appointment with their Form Tutor or Head of Year is often a good place to start.

Kidscape suggest completing a Bullying Log to help communication between parent, child and teacher. You can download copies of a Bullying Log from their website (see Further Information / Useful Organisations on the next page).

Teachers often have practical ideas about how to speak to the main culprits about their behaviour, without revealing the source of their information, as many children fear 'telling' will only make things worse.

### How you may feel

Being the parent of a child who is bullied can bring up strong emotional feelings of rage, injustice and helplessness. You may need support from your friends and family to cope with your own reactions, and make sure you can help your child find a solution.

If you feel that the school is being unsupportive, or is not doing enough to stop the bullying, then speak to the school's parent governor and explain your concerns.

## Further information / useful organisations

The internet is full of sites with ideas for children to use to stop bullying. Some of the best are:

Kidscape ([www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk))

Childline ([www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk))

Changing Faces ([www.changingfaces.co.uk](http://www.changingfaces.co.uk)).

***"Help! I'm being bullied"*** by Dr Emily Lovegrove (ISBN 1905170343) is a very useful book with practical, tried and tested ideas for young people at secondary school and their parents.

**Dr Louise Dalton** (Oxford) and **Dr Jane Lewendon** (Salisbury) are the Clinical Psychologists with the Spires Cleft Centre. They attend most clinics, but are always happy to be contacted via the Cleft Team Coordinator to discuss the progress of your child and any concerns relating to teasing or bullying.

For more information about the Cleft Psychology Service, see the Psychology web page ([www.spirecentre.nhs.uk](http://www.spirecentre.nhs.uk)).

## How to contact us

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[www.spirecentre.nhs.uk](http://www.spirecentre.nhs.uk) Tel: 01865 234 252

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473**. When we receive your call we may transfer you to an interpreter. This can take some time, so please be patient.

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