

# Internet vultures: As a teenage suicide victim is mocked online, LIN JONES reveals how her own son fell prey to the dark side of the net

Daily Mail



Bullied to death: Public schoolgirl Natasha MacBryde, 15, died after being struck by a train on the railway line near Bromsgrove

Fans of the internet never tire of proclaiming its virtues.

Communications, business, travel, entertainment and shopping have all been transformed — opening up new worlds, enriching people's lives and vastly expanding consumer choice.

Yet the darker side of the internet has all too often been ignored. Just as computers can be a force for good, so they can promote misery and harm. In our brave new cyber world, freedom of communication can degenerate into a licence to abuse.

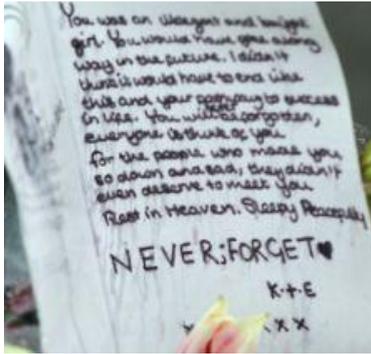
The truth is that the internet has opened up a window on the cruel and vicious side of human nature. In the virtual sphere, online sadists operate with impunity.

On many websites, particularly those aimed at the young, the boundaries of normal, civilised behaviour have been replaced by the sort of savage anarchy famously portrayed in William Golding's novel *Lord Of The Flies*, in which civilised prep school boys turn into savages.

The consequences were highlighted this week by the tragic case of Natasha MacBryde, a 15-year-old schoolgirl who committed suicide after a remorseless campaign of internet bullying.

But that was not all. The malice that had led to her death continued on the internet, causing more anguish to her distraught family.

A Facebook website set up in Natasha's memory was invaded by a deluge of offensive comments, ranging from sick jokes about the manner of her death to spiteful remarks about her character. This form of cyber bullying is known as 'trolling'.



A Facebook site set up in Natasha's memory (right) was invaded by spiteful, offensive comments. Left, a written tribute to the much loved pupil and daughter

One of the worst forms of on-line bullying comes from the so-called 'trolls', who post outrageous comments to get a perverted thrill from the reaction they provoke. As Natasha's father, Andrew, said: 'I simply cannot understand how these people get any enjoyment or satisfaction from making such disgraceful comments.'

Sadly, Natasha MacBryde's case is not unique. Persecution through the web, by mobile phone, text or micro-blogging site Twitter is rife among young people.