**Schoolgirl, 13, found hanged amid claims she was bullied because she was pretty**



*Poppy Bracey was found hanged in her bedroom. She was taken to hospital but died later*

*An investigation has been launched into the death of a 13-year-old schoolgirl amid claims she hanged herself after being bullied because she was pretty.*

Poppy Bracey was found in her bedroom last week after returning home from her Manchester school. The teenager was taken to hospital but later died.

Council officials said today they are looking into allegations Poppy was being bullied in the run up to the death.

Friends at 1,000-pupil Lowton High School, in Leigh, posted a series of messages on internet sites claiming Poppy was being picked on.

One, at the specialist sports college where former pupils said: 'This poor girl was apparently being bullied at Lowton High School and has sadly ended her own life by hanging herself.'

Another said: 'Why would someone want to bully her?? Apart from jealousy.'

Kayleigh Midgley said: 'You were stunning what a shame. Hope the b\*\*\*\*\*\*s feel so guilty.'

Sue Higson said: 'Poppy you are an angel, hope you are resting in peace, and smiling down to your family and friends, who are missing you everyday.

Poppy was in foster care and living in Leigh, at the time of her death.

Nick Hudson, council executive director for Children and Young People's Services, said: 'Poppy's untimely and tragic death has shocked and saddened many people.

'However, there is an investigation under way into the cause of her death and as a result we feel it is inappropriate to speculate about what has happened until the outcome of the coroner's inquest. Our thoughts at this time are with Poppy's family, friends and all who cared about her at this difficult time.'

Lowton High School headteacher John Shanahan said: 'Poppy was a lively, bright and friendly young person who was popular with both staff and students.

'She will be remembered for the care and consideration she showed to others as well as for her dry sense of humour.'

On its website the school said: 'The welfare and happiness of our students is central.'

It adds: 'Our aim is to ensure that they develop into thoughtful, mature and fulfilled young adults equipped to make the most of the opportunities available to them when they leave us.

'We work hard to ensure that the whole school community works together in a climate of mutual respect and support.'

# Perfectionist schoolgirl hanged herself while worried about appearance

## A perfectionist schoolgirl described as "fit, healthy and popular" killed herself because she felt fat and ugly, an inquest heard.

Imogen D'Arcy, 13, spent the weeks leading up to her death searching internet sites for information on anorexia and suicide.

The lyrics to the song Courage, by the group Superchick, about personal suffering and not eating were also found on her computer.  Imogen's father Paul, 51, found her hanging from the bathroom door by the flex of his laptop in the bathroom of the family's home in Adel, Leeds. After he had freed her and attempted resuscitation, Mr D'Arcy noticed a note in her handwriting which had been left on the toilet seat.

He said: "I took it to the bedroom and read the first paragraph but I couldn't read any more. It appeared Imogen had a problem with her body image, she felt fat and ugly. This is not true she doesn't have an ounce of fat on her."

Imogen was transferred from hospital to a hospice and a decision taken to switch off her life support machine after eight days. Mr D'Arcy and his wife Susan, 40 were convinced that their daughter, who enjoyed playing football and running, did not have a eating disorder.

Imogen, who has four sisters aged three to 18, had been for a haircut with her mother on the day she died last December. Her mother had shouted at her when she refused to tidy up the children's toys before she was left in the house with her youngest sister while the rest of the family went shopping. Imogen, who played the clarinet and flute, sent a text message from her mobile phone which read: "My mum swore at me and I couldn't take any more."

Recording a verdict that she took her own life, Melanie Williamson, the coroner, said: "Imogen was a fit and healthy 13-year-old girl, a popular young lady and fitted in well with her colleagues. She was a perfectionist and like so many others she was affected by her shape, weight and size."

Mrs D'Arcy said Imogen was a shy, gentle and kind-hearted girl who was performing well academically and well-liked by her friends and teachers.

She said: "In the weeks leading up to her suicide attempt her behaviour gave no clue to the suicidal thoughts that had taken hold of her mind. Imogen accessed internet suicide sites on her computer and whilst these were not the root cause of her suicidal thoughts, these sites provided her with the means and guaranteed the success of her actions. The pain and anguish of losing our daughter through suicide is indescribable. We would urge parents to exercise extreme vigilance in overseeing the use of the Internet by young teenagers."

\* The lyrics found by police in Imogen's computer from the song Courage, by Superchick read:

I don't know the first time I felt unbeautiful

The day I chose not to eat

What I do know is how I've changed my life forever,

I know I should know better

There are days when I'm OK

And for a moment, for a moment I find hope

But there are days when I'm not OK

And I need your help

So I'm letting go

**Pre-reading activities**

1. *In pairs/groups discuss these questions.*
2. Have you heard about adolescents’ suicides? What might be the reasons for which the young people don’t want to live?
3. Who, do you think, commit suicides more often - boys or girls? Why do you think so?
4. Do you thing bullying can lead a young girl/boy to committing a suicide?
5. *Try to explain these words in English.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| amid | bully | allegation | pick on |
| jealousy | foster care | inappropriate | inquest |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| appearance | anorexia | flex |
| switch off | swear | clue |
| anguish | vigilance | urge |

**Reading activities**

1. *Scan the two articles and compare them. What do they have in common and which are the differences.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Common** | **Different** |
|  |  |

1. *Read the articles again and explain how you understand these phrases.*
2. Poppy was in foster care.
3. Poppy was popular with both staff and students.
4. The welfare and happiness of our students is central.
5. She was performing well academically and well-liked by her friends and teachers.
6. Her behaviour gave no clue to the suicidal thoughts.
7. *Give the adjectives of opposite meaning.*
8. She was lively, bright and friendly.

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1. They are thoughtful, mature and fulfilled young adults.

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1. The girl was shy, gentle and kind-hearted.

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**Post-reading activities**

1. *In pairs/groups discuss these points.*
2. Who is to blame for what happened to Poppy and Imogen – family, school officials, school mates friends. State your reason why you think so.
3. If you were a school psychological consultant, what would you advise to those two girls to persuade them not to commit a suicide?
4. Do you thing that young people in your country can solve such problems in the same way?
5. *Watch the video and give a short written summary of what you heard.*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xpEzoJkxg0&feature=channel>

1. *Divide into groups and try to prepare a school anti-bullying programme.*

1. *Discuss the following paragraph taken from the Czech press.*

**Sixteen-year-old released after threatening to blow up school**

Police have closed the case of a 16-year-old boy who wrote in a school essay that he planned to blow up his school and kill all his classmates after being exposed to bullying. A home search revealed that he had downloaded instructions on how to make explosives but further questioning revealed that he would not have been up to the task and had written the essay as a provocation. The boy was made to undergo psychological tests before being released.