

# DIE DIE DIE

In July 2009 Peter Harvey, a teacher at All Saints' Roman Catholic School in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, attacked a pupil with a three kilogram metal dumbbell shouting 'Die, die, die,' and fractured his right temple-bone. On April 29, 2010, he was cleared of grievous bodily harm with intent, and he is expected to receive a community service order.

If he had attacked an adult with such a weapon, no matter what the provocation, the sentence would have been much more severe. As it was, he was charged with attempted murder, and the charge was dismissed. Children in school are treated as less than human, and violence against them is thought to be less important than violence against adults.

Children also consider teachers to be less than human, and taunt and persecute them. Shortly before the incident the boy concerned had been throwing paper around the room and sword-fighting with a friend with metre rulers, and a fourteen-year-old girl who he sent out of the room called him a bald-headed bastard. This kind of situation is blamed on the children and not on the system, which herds them into spaces where they do not want to be and requires them to do things that seem to them to be boring and valueless.

Predictably, Chris Keates of the NASUWT said, 'I think any teacher who's been following the events of this week will recognise that circumstances like this can actually occur.' She said she and the NASUWT were 'extremely concerned that lessons are learned from what's happened.'

The NASUWT believes that school students are wild and out of control and must be controlled with stronger discipline. When this is attempted it only creates more hostility between teachers and taught. Until schools become places where children want to be and it is recognised that classrooms must be places of co-operation rather than domination, the baiting of teachers will continue, some teachers will driven into breakdowns and perhaps, as has happened several times in Japan, a teacher may actually kill a child.

Where the children despise the teachers and the teachers despise the children,  
there is little chance of meaningful education.