

# French teachers under attack; art lessons and media literacy cause 'offence'

I [mentioned last night](#) that I had seen reports of teachers in other schools in France under attack from pupils and their parents about what seem to my eyes to be quite normal lessons. These reports are from the French newspaper La Parisien and I'll paraphrase using 0-level French and the technology of Google translate. Both took place in towns in the department of Yvelines in the region Ile-de-France, the same department where Samuel Paty lived and worked.



[First the incident at Cartier College](#), a secondary school of 656 students. Last Thursday 7th December during the art class the teacher presented to the 6eme (Y7 in UK, ie 11years old) a 17th century painting of a classic subject matter. It was the legend of Diana and Actaeon by Giuseppe Cesari, alias Le Cavalier d'Arpin. The painting shows Actaeon stumbling upon

Diana and her companions who are bathing in a stream, hence they have no clothes on. There are also a couple of rather cute dogs. The pupils objected to the naked ladies. The head teacher got involved. Things got heated. Teachers were accused of racism.

This isn't the only incident. Since October, at least fourteen so-called "establishment" incidents (attacks on secularism, people, security or property, racism, etc.) have been recorded.

In a letter sent on 1st December 2023 to the Deputy Academic Director of the National Education Services, and which we have been able to consult, it is mentioned in particular "multiple slanderous denunciations and acts of defamation by students and parents of students towards staff (...) accused of insulting, insulting and threatening students", and even "sexual assault or failure to assist a person in danger".

Children are attacking teachers, questioning their teaching (beyond the proper reasoned debate which a good teacher should encourage) including threats of rape and death. Against a background of the murder of Samuel Paty and feeling ignored by the authorities this week the teachers walked out and set up a demonstration in the playground which included dressing the school's statue of Christopher Columbus to express their distress and fear.

*"We're very scared, it reminded us of Samuel Paty!"*

This next is a direct translation by Google:- *This other teacher, who has been with the school for more than two decades, describes "a gradual changeover, year after year", "a deterioration at high speed", and "unfiltered students", comforted by "teacher **bashing**" and the discourse of their parents. ("The child king", she sums up). "The last class of 6<sup>e</sup> would seem to embody this . . .*

Then yesterday, [Friday 8th there was trouble at the middle school](#) in Mantes-la-Jolie. Teachers decided to teach a project on 'media literacy'. The aim was to show how war and conflict is dealt with by the written press and for this they studied the reports in the magazine Mon quotidien, intended for children. The magazine makes an effort to be objective and so did the teachers. However in one paragraph Hamas was described, in accordance with the practice of, inter alia, the EU and the US, as a terrorist organisation. The parents were outraged and made their anger known in a WhatsApp discussion which also named two teachers as worthy of especial criticism.



Mantes-la-Jolie (Yvelines), this Friday morning. Teachers exercised their right to withdraw after a controversy over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. LP

Naturally those teachers are not happy. The head met with the parents who seem to have calmed down but the teachers were still sufficiently alarmed that they too walked out, although normal lessons were restored later.

Neither reports mention the demographic of the complaining pupils and parents as specifically Muslim, but the article ends:-

*This debate is a reminder of [the difficulties that teachers now face in addressing certain subjects](#). The study of Islam, secularism and sex education have become sensitive subjects,*

*and more and more teachers admit to practicing self-censorship. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict must now be added to this list.*

From which I infer that the pupils concerned are Muslim, and they will be further emboldened by the lenient sentences handed out to the minors involved in the murder of their teachers' colleague.