# Violence at port talbot school raises serious concerns about leadership



The recent violent incident at St Joseph’s Catholic School and Sixth Form Centre in Port Talbot, Wales, has sent shockwaves through the community and raised serious questions about the school’s environment and leadership. Dr John Felton, the head teacher, who has been characterised as a strict disciplinarian, is set to be sentenced for his brutal attack on his deputy, Richard Pyke, which occurred on a significant day in the Christian calendar—Ash Wednesday.

The attack unfolded on March 5, during school hours when approximately 900 students were present. Felton, who allegedly wielded a heavy adjustable spanner, struck Pyke multiple times, leaving him with non-life-threatening injuries. Eyewitness accounts indicate that during the assault, neighbouring classrooms heard the sounds of the attack alongside pleas for help from Pyke. An investigation revealed that Felton's aggression stemmed from an alleged love triangle involving a young female staff member, further complicating the school’s already troubled dynamics.

Moments before the attack, Felton had sent an email to staff, apologising for the distress expected to unfold that day, a message that now raises critical questions about his state of mind and professional conduct. In court, Felton later admitted to a charge of attempted wounding with intent. His barrister described the turn of events as “a spectacular fall from grace,” emphasising the significance of his actions both within the school environment and the broader community.

The relationship dynamics in the school were evidently complex, as Felton's suspicions regarding the deputy head's relationship with a younger colleague had reportedly been escalating. Felton’s email accused the female teacher—who is also a former pupil—of having inappropriate relationships with at least two staff members, including Mr Pyke, leading to tensions that culminated in the violent outburst. The female teacher, understood to have previously been in a relationship with Felton, has since taken a leave of absence from the school.

This incident has provoked outrage among the parents and local community members, prompting calls for a public inquiry. Kim Isherwood, chair of Public Child Protection Wales, expressed her alarm regarding the implications of such a violent act occurring on school grounds, stating, “For a crime of passion to take place on school grounds like this is astonishing. It’s a complete disaster.” Many parents are questioning the integrity of the school environment, with some expressing concerns that the incident sets a poor example for students in a faith-based institution.

Dr Felton, who has taught at St Joseph’s for over two decades and had only recently taken over as head teacher, is also noted for his previous strictness and involvement in school governance. Under his direction, the school has faced scrutiny regarding its disciplinary practices, particularly concerning students with special educational needs. In a recent tribunal ruling, he was obliged to address issues related to safeguarding and the treatment of a pupil with disabilities, further complicating his professional standing.

Witness testimonies highlight a clear divide among parents regarding Felton’s leadership style, with some praising him as an exemplary math teacher while others criticise his management approach as overly harsh. A parental perspective captured the sentiment that Felton had shown strong academic abilities but faltered as a leader, describing him as a micromanager who struggled to trust staff members.

Pending sentencing at Swansea Crown Court, Felton’s future remains uncertain. He faces a custodial sentence, a stark contrast to the respected educator he once was. Judge Paul Thomas KC indicated that due to the severity of the incident and its circumstances, a prison sentence is inevitable. Dr Felton is scheduled to learn his fate on April 25. As the community grapples with the fallout from this episode, many are left pondering the comprehensive ramifications for the school and its ethos amid the deeply troubling events.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/DII_pwkNEJy/> - This URL does not directly corroborate specific details from the article but shows a general interest in incidents involving educators. However, it does not provide information directly related to the St Joseph’s Catholic School incident.
* <https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/rulesofcourt.pdf> - This URL provides general information on court proceedings but does not directly relate to the specific incident at St Joseph’s Catholic School.
* <https://www.mass.gov/guide-to-evidence/article-xi-miscellaneous> - This URL discusses legal procedures and evidence rules but does not directly pertain to the events or claims made in the article about St Joseph’s Catholic School.
* <https://www.txcourts.gov/media/1457525/texas-rules-of-civil-procedure.pdf> - This URL provides information on Texas civil procedure rules, which does not directly support any claims made in the article about the incident at St Joseph’s Catholic School.
* <https://www.acquisition.gov/far/part-9> - This URL focuses on federal contractor qualifications and does not provide any relevant information regarding the incident described in the article.