



... children, their world, their education

NEWS COMMENT: 11 DECEMBER 2007

COMMENT ON TODAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S PLAN

Responding to Ed Balls' announcement (11 December 2007) about the Government's Children's Plan, Primary Review director Professor Robin Alexander said:

'The Primary Review is pleased to hear that the Government is responding positively to the concerns about children and childhood expressed in a number of recent reports, including those published by the Primary Review. The Review is also glad to note that having initially rejected its recently-published evidence on the problems of the current testing regime, the Government now accepts that the system needs to change.'

'Over the coming months the Primary Review will continue to publish carefully-researched surveys of evidence relating to children and their primary education, and hopes that the Government will receive them in the same constructive spirit with which they have been commissioned and released.'

Notes to editors

- On 12 October the Primary Review published *Community Soundings*, the first in its series of 32 interim reports. This reported on the 87 regional witness sessions conducted earlier this year with teachers, parents, children and a wide range of community representatives and noted that although children themselves were optimistic, there was widespread concern among adults about the pressures children face both inside and outside school. On 23 November, the Review published further reports about the lives and views of today's primary children, in the form of extensive surveys of published research commissioned from its team of 70 academic consultants. Again, the issue of pressure on children was prominent.
- On 2 November, the Review published three reports on standards, testing and assessment at the primary stage, also based on extensive surveys of published evidence. These raised serious questions about standards and the validity and side effects of the current system by which standards are assessed.
- All these reports have provoked considerable media interest and public comment.
- In an article in *Times Educational Supplement* on 2 November which coincided with the publication of the Primary Review's three reports on standards, assessment and testing, Professor Alexander wrote:

'The consensus which these reports reinforce is now so commanding that it is hard to resist the view that sooner rather than later the apparatus of national testing must change radically and that we should entertain very different views of both classroom assessment and what 'standards' at the primary stage should entail.'
- The Primary Review is publishing a further four reports this week (14 December), this time on children's development, learning and educational needs. For details see press release 07/04, issued yesterday (10 December).
- Based at the University of Cambridge, supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and directed by Professor Robin Alexander, the Primary Review was launched in October 2006 and will run for two years. It aims to gather evidence from a wide range of sources, sift facts from rhetoric, and stimulate debate about the future of this vital phase of education. The Review will culminate in a report containing recommendations for future policy and practice. The most comprehensive such enquiry since the Plowden Report of 1967, the Primary Review is examining how well the current English system of primary education is doing, how it can be improved and how primary schools should respond to the national and global challenges which lie ahead. Along the way, the Review is assessing the impact of government primary education initiatives of the past 20 years.

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