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INTERIM REPORTS

Research Survey 7/1

PARENTING, CARING AND EDUCATING

Yolande Muschamp, Felicity Wikeley,
Tess Ridge and Maria Balarin
University of Bath

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PRIMARY REVIEW INTERIM REPORTS

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**Yolande Muschamp, Felicity Wikeley,
Tess Ridge and Maria Balarin**

October 2007

This is one of a series of 32 interim reports from the Primary Review, an independent enquiry into the condition and future of primary education in England. The Review was launched in October 2006 and will publish its final report in late 2008.

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A briefing which summarises key issues from this report has also been published. The report and briefing are available electronically at the Primary Review website: www.primaryreview.org.uk. The website also contains Information about other reports in this series and about the Primary Review as a whole. (Note that minor amendments may be made to the electronic version of reports after the hard copies have been printed).

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The report forms part of the Review's research survey strand, which consists of thirty specially-commissioned surveys of published research and other evidence relating to the Review's ten themes. The themes and reports are listed in Appendices 1 and 3.

This survey relates to Primary Review theme 7, **Parenting, Caring and Educating**.

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PARENTING, CARING AND EDUCATING

Abstract

In this survey of published research we review changing patterns in the structure of the families and identify trends in parenting and caring for today's generation of primary school children. We reveal how the reduction in the number of children born, the increase in the proportion of lone parents and the increasing age at which women have their first child have resulted in greater diversity of family forms, and parenting and caring practices. The impact of these changes on primary education is discussed through a review of the impact of government policy in relation to the role of parents and the home-school relationship. We conclude that the diversity in family structures brings with it complex administrative demands for home-school communication and a complex array of family relationships for teachers to understand and engage with. The school remains a primary source of community-based support for working parents and carers, although the impact of complex employment arrangements adds to the demands for child care support beyond the school day.

The most challenging home circumstance, which cannot be viewed optimistically, is the increasing number of children living in relative poverty. Poverty remains a significant factor in the lives of many children with the inevitable impact in terms of health and wellbeing and a child's capacity to engage fully in school activities, both financially and emotionally.

Further research is needed into the lives of children and how their complex family relations, and the caring roles which many children undertake, impact on their education. In reality home-school relationships are between individual parents and individual teachers who both have the interests of the child at heart. Parents are not a homogeneous group but neither are teachers, and attempts to improve the relationship between both groups need to acknowledge the strengths and expertise of both. Teachers need to establish more fruitful links between home and school which build on the support for children's learning that already exists in the home and community. Further research as to how this can happen would be helpful.

Introduction

The aim of this survey is to provide a critical summary of the research which identifies the changes in patterns of parenting and caring in the pre-adolescence years over the past few decades. We examine roles and relationships of parents, carers and teachers in the home-school relationship and review the evidence on the efficacy and problems of different approaches. Part one focuses on the changes in the structure and formation of the family which reveal the diversity that now exists in parenting and child-care roles and practice. Part two focuses on parenting practices and assesses the impact of these on children's welfare and the conditions on which successful primary education may depend. Part three reviews the policy context of home-school relationships. Part four reviews the research into the home-school interface and the role of the home in supporting pupil learning. We conclude with a discussion of the main challenges for the primary school in managing their approaches to the relationship between parenting, caring and education, and highlight areas which would benefit from future research.

Methods and coverage

We have drawn on a range of methodological approaches for this survey. We have included both quantitative and qualitative data. The studies reviewed include large government sponsored surveys and independent research projects carried out by university research teams which range from longitudinal case studies of individual children, to national surveys of schools and families. We draw on government surveys and data bases, for example the overviews and summaries provided by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in a range of publications and on their websites. We have used a range of bibliographic and research institute data bases to review research reports and research findings reported in books and journal articles. The theoretical perspectives vary within these studies. We have worked within broad sociological perspectives in relation to the changing patterns of family structure, parenting practices and the policy context for an examination of the home-school relationship. Our research into learning in the home reflects the socio-cultural perspective taken in key studies. The literature in these fields is very extensive and our review is able to include only a small selection of what is available but we have used it to identify key trends in parenting, caring and education and provide a summary of research which illustrates and explains how the current context has changed since the review described in the Plowden Report (CACE 1967).

1 The structure and formation of the family

Demographic and social changes in the last half of the twentieth century have wrought considerable transformation in family formation and structure. Trends toward reduced fertility and later child bearing have led to an overall reduction in the number of children being born in economically developed western societies. Increasing instability in family life and rising rates of family dissolution have resulted in greater diversity and complexity of family forms. Whilst the majority of children still live with both of their natural parents (married or cohabiting), one in four dependent children live in lone-parent families. Children in the twenty-first century have a higher probability of experiencing parental separation, lone parenting, step families, visiting families, half-siblings and being an only child than children of 40 years ago (Bradshaw and Mayhew 2005: 34). As a consequence children's lives are increasingly complex.

Statistics from the National Office of Statistics (ONS 2007) show the changing fertility and child bearing patterns in the UK. The last 40 years have been characterised by a fall in the number of children born, a rise in the average age of women at the birth of their first child and higher levels of childlessness. In 2005 the average age of women having their first child was 27.3 years. This compares with 23.7 in 1970. In 2005 the total fertility rate in the UK was 1.79 children per woman. Whilst this was at its highest level since 1992 (up from 1.77 children in 2004) (ONS 2007), fewer children being born means smaller families overall – although this trend is not reflected in some ethnic minority groups. These changes impact on family dynamics as parents have fewer children among whom to divide their attention and resources; children have fewer siblings; and many more children are an only child.

At the same time new family structures are emerging, creating a greater range of situations in which children are cared for. The proportion of households where dependent children live with a lone parent has doubled since 1970, reaching 6 per cent in 2002, and nine in ten lone parents are women (Spencer-Dawe 2005). Until the mid-1980s a large part of this rise was due to divorce, but more recently the number of single, lone mothers has grown at a faster rate. There are also more step-families, consisting typically of a couple living with one

or more children from the woman's previous relationship. This reflects the tendency for children to stay with their mother following the break-up of a partnership. Cohabitation appears more unstable than marriage and is more likely to result in separation and lone motherhood. Greater diversity in the parenting environment can also be expected with the growing numbers of gay and lesbian families.

These trends are not confined to England and the United Kingdom. Although the UK now has the highest proportion of lone families in Europe, there is increasing diversity across Europe where many countries are also experiencing reduced fertility, later child bearing and increases in the proportion of smaller families, and numbers of lone parents.

2 Parenting practices

The diversity of family structure is reflected in an increasingly wide range of parenting practices. For lone parents the double burden of work and care has impacted on the parenting role. As the majority of lone parents are women, who are already disadvantaged in the labour market, children may experience the impact of their mother's difficulties in balancing work and care. On a smaller scale, the increase in the number of gay parents has led to an increase in the number of children raised by two men or two women, as well as to an increase in diverse support networks, for example, two mothers with the involvement of sperm donation fathers.

As the complexity of family forms grows, more children will experience shared care. Shared care may mean children experiencing parenting in different locations across time and space or two very different sets of living arrangements or parenting practices. The involvement of non-resident fathers in school and parenting may be a regular feature of children's experience but the non-resident father may also be an erratic presence. Children may spend very different amounts of time with the non-resident parent: for example, this could be regular weekend contact or only occasional holiday visits. Children may be living in two places over the week with different sets of siblings, both birth and step, in each. Schools in these circumstances may find it difficult to know which parent is the first point of contact, and children may have to reconcile different expectations relating to school work from their parents.

The proportion of women in employment has also increased in recent decades (McDowell et al 2005) and this has led to an increase in complex child care arrangements. Despite this and the debates about the changing role of men, traditional assumptions about the seeming relationship between femininity and caring remain relatively fixed (McKie et al 2002). The extent to which child care responsibilities affect labour market participation still varies considerably between men and women (Hatt 1997) and many women, especially those in working class households, still do not have a genuine choice between 'family work' and 'market work' (Walters 2005). Nevertheless women with partners have higher employment rates than lone mothers, although the gap closes as children get older (Holtermann et al 1999). In coupled working families, employment opportunities have led to 'shift' parenting where an increasing number of mothers work when the father is at home (maybe evenings or weekends), and vice versa. With increased longevity and better health, this shared care now stretches to multi-generation or 'beanpole' families (Brannen 2004) which can be a potential resource for family support but can also create increase demands for care. The national New Deal for Lone Parents programme aims to support lone mothers, who have the lowest rate of employment, into employment (Spencer-Dawe 2005). These mothers are encouraged to start work when the youngest child reaches school age and although there is no compunction at present to work, the numbers of lone mothers at work is rising slowly.

Labour markets are now characterised by insecure employment, increased part time work and shift work, which inevitably create problems for the work-life balance of families (Auer 2002). Fathers in England now work the longest hours in Europe and poor child care provision remains an issue especially for parents who work unsocial hours. Thirty-two per cent of mothers and 46 per cent of fathers who worked unsocial hours said their job limited the time that they could spend reading with, playing with or helping their children with homework, compared with 12 per cent of mothers and 18 per cent of fathers who worked office hours (La Valle et al 2002). Labour market inequalities have created a broad spectrum with dual wage earners at one end, through a large group of one and a half wage earners, to no-wage earners at the other. No wage means poverty and reliance on benefits, and the year 2006 saw the first rise in the number of children living in poverty since the Government's pledge to end child poverty in a generation. 3.8 million children now live below the poverty line (DWP 2007). Larger families are particularly vulnerable to poverty, and are often from ethnic minority communities. Large families in the UK are among the poorest in the OECD (Bradshaw et al 2006).

These changes have a direct impact on the ways in which parents engage with their children's education.

3 The policy context of home and school

In the past few decades, the relationship between parents and schools has been radically altered. While there is a long-standing acknowledgement of the value of parental involvement in schooling, the ways in which such involvement has been conceptualised have changed considerably. These changes followed the evolving conceptions of citizenship and civic participation in general (Vincent and Tomlinson 1997). From a post-war view that saw a clear separation between the public and private realms, 'the late 1960s and 1970s witnessed a shift in the hegemonic view of how parents should relate to schools' in which '...parental involvement became "good-practice"' (p.363).

Although some emphasis on parental involvement was already present in the 1944 Education Act, it was during the late 1960s and 1970s that it became a central component of educational policies. In 1967 the Plowden Report set out what would become major concerns in relation to home-school relationships. The report was heavily influenced by research carried out by educational sociologists, who questioned the meritocratic ideals of the 1944 Act and highlighted the influence of socio-economic factors in school success (Douglas 1964; Bernstein 1970; Brown 1997). The acknowledgement of these issues within the report created a 'deficit model' of parenting. The report argued for the greater involvement of parents in schools in order to 'compensate for society' (Docking 1990). However, much of the policy emphasis during this time was on the provision of social welfare by schools through interventions such as free school meals and Educational Priority Areas that increased resources for schools operating in deprived neighbourhoods (Blackstone 1967). The Plowden Report also placed considerable emphasis on home-school communication, setting expectations of regular meetings, open days and parent-teacher associations. Whilst some criticised the report for not providing more specific guidelines for improving such communications (Blackstone 1967), there was a proliferation of small studies that promoted good practice. However, the rhetoric continued to place parents as a problem rather than as a support for schools. For example, schools still felt they needed to compensate for language deficit on entry to school (Tough 1976; Hughes 1994) despite evidence to the contrary (Tizard and Hughes 1984; Wells 1987).

In the 1980s the role for parents was recast as being that of 'consumers'. The Conservative government's rhetoric during this time put considerable emphasis on what it considered a crisis in family values, placing families at the centre of most educational and social policies. At the same time, their promotion of a market ideology for public administration in general entailed a much more active role for parents, who were now seen as 'clients' and 'consumers' of educational services (Crozier 2000). Parental choice, the main driver of 'excellence' in the educational market, was promoted by such policies as Grant-Maintained Schools (which allowed parents to vote for their school to opt out of local education authority control). The government also gave more voice to parents, by increasing their involvement in school decisions through greater representation on governing bodies, and promoting a monitoring role in relation to school practices through making those governors accountable at an annual meeting for parents, and during school inspections.

While the election of a Labour government in 1997 raised expectations of possible changes in the market ideology, there appeared to be strong continuities in terms of the actual policies. Some would even argue that in spite of considerable refinement in the government rhetoric concerning parental involvement, New Labour deepened some of the trends in home-school relations that were initiated by its predecessors (Cardini 2006). The shift in rhetoric moved from the ideology of parent-as-consumer to the creation of educational partnerships. With the publication of the White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* (DfES 1997), the government made a clear statement of the crucial role played by family-school partnerships in ensuring the improvement of educational standards. The government placed considerable emphasis on parental support for learning; for example the introduction of Home-School Agreements (DfEE 1998a) and the Homework guidelines for Primary and Secondary Schools (DfEE 1998b). However this guidance was prescriptive as home-school agreements set out 'mutual responsibilities and expectations' (Smith 2000: 319) and guidelines provided specific instructions on the way in which homework should take place. The documentation made a clear case for focusing homework on the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills, thus linking it to the government's literacy and numeracy strategies. There was also an indication of the number of hours per day that children of different ages should commit to homework, and schools were expected to provide clear guidance. Parents were only expected to monitor their children's completion of homework.

The emphasis on partnership continued with the more recent 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' (DfES 2004) which re-stated the 'building of stronger relationships with parents and the wider community' as one of the government's central policy aims. Similarly the White Paper, 'Higher Standards, Better Schools' (DfES 2005), placed considerable emphasis on the importance of home-school communication in securing greater pupil achievement. The White Paper stressed parents' rights to be regularly and adequately informed of their children's progress in school. The balance had shifted, at least in the rhetoric, to 'a notion of a home-school alliance that promotes the wider interests of children and the community' identified earlier by Wolfendale and Topping (1995: 2). This emphasis on home-school partnership had begun to address the problems of the deficit model of the previous decades but it did not remove the conflicting roles for schools. On the one hand teachers were to seek out partnership with parents in the education of their children, and on the other hand the detailed guidance and information that they were to provide for parents suggested that they were to continue to compensate for parental lack of ability or interest in education.

4 Home-school relations

The question of who retains power and control has remained central to much research into home-school relationships. Vincent (1996) questioned the idea that parents could be 'empowered' by teachers to play a more active role in the education of their children, as this ignored 'the considerable limitations imposed on agency by the contexts in which teachers and other education professionals work' (p2). In this sense, the reality of parental participation suggests that parents from different backgrounds will enact and take advantage of the empowerment agenda in different ways. The work of Epstein (Epstein and Becker 1982; Epstein 1995; Epstein, Sanders et al. 2002) in the US takes an optimistic view, providing a typology of school-home relationships which has informed research in the UK (see David 1998; Hughes and Greenhough 2006). Epstein and her colleagues suggest that several strategies can be deployed to empower parents and improve home-school relationships. In particular, they highlight the importance of school initiatives which aim to promote parental involvement and provide clear guidelines on ways in which learning can be supported in the home. In this sense, much recent research into family-school relationships has focused precisely on understanding how relationships within homes, as well as those between home and school, might generate improved learning outcomes for children. While Epstein's work focused on specific ways in which parents are involved in educational activities in the home, research emerging from the social capital perspective highlights the more general ways in which parents can establish 'positive relations with their children that reinforce school learning at home and provide opportunities, encouragement and emotional support for children's ongoing education' (Hao and Bonstead-Bruns 1998: 176).

The work of Lareau (1987; 2000) on family-school relationships, however, brings a further critical perspective to the possibilities of generating better educational results through improving children's home environment. Lareau places considerable emphasis on the importance of parents and children understanding 'the rules of the game' that operate in schools. She highlights how elements of social class, race and language can mediate relations between the family and school, but suggests that the deployment of adequate strategies can help 'activate' children's capital in educationally positive ways. In her extensive research into the different educational strategies deployed by parents, she shows that while both middle and working class parents have considerable interest in wanting to help their children succeed in school, middle-class parents appear to have considerably more resources to do so effectively. Middle class parents deploy more strategies to actually influence their children's educational experience, through for instance supporting homework and keeping close contact with school teachers (Lareau 2000). Working class parents, on the other hand, tend more often to believe that academic matters should be left to teachers, and in some cases even feel 'intimidated by teacher's professional authority' (Lareau 2000, p.viii). They often lack the knowledge of what information is relevant for them to follow their children's progress in school, and also 'lack confidence in their ability to address pedagogical issues. The structure of their family life often hinders more active involvement and they are ideologically inclined to view family and school as separate spheres' (Lareau 2000, p.xii).

Such findings are echoed by Crozier (1997) who, in the UK context, found that working class parents are less likely than middle class ones to get involved in their children's education, and that when they do, it is generally in non-academic activities. Crozier and Davies (2006) found that there was also less involvement in some ethnic groups. They found that many Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents living in England, despite being concerned about education and willing to get involved, appeared to lack the educational knowledge appropriate for helping their children at home.

The longitudinal studies of Pollard and Filer (1996; 1999) give further insight to these arguments. Their detailed studies of children's development over the seven years of their primary schooling, recorded in both the home and school, show the influence of parents and teachers on the development of pupil identities. While the authors endorse the idea that pupils' learning experiences in school are influenced by their relations at home, they have a broader understanding of what the latter means, which includes not only relations with parents, but also with siblings, peers and teachers. Moreover, the authors show that the way in which these relations impinge on children's learning is in the way that they contribute to the development of children's identities, rather than through their more specific educational efforts. While this does not undermine the emphasis on improving parental support for learning or enhancing home-school relations, it does suggest that the understanding of parental roles has to be broader than it appears to be. Edwards and Warin (1999), for instance, have shown how many schools have a rather narrow view of what parental support for learning should comprise, with many schools seeing parents as 'support teachers' doing more of what is done in school.

A broader view of the parental role in learning is provided by Tizard and Hughes (1984; 2002) in their study of learning in the home. They argue that while many parents do not engage in activities such as play, games or stories that are educationally advantageous, many of the other simpler activities they do while caring for their children, such as merely talking, can be seen as being educationally advantageous. They show specific examples of useful learning outcomes which result from everyday parent-child activities such as making a shopping list, looking out of the window, living with babies, discussing past and future events, and watching television. They argue that 'learning at home occurs in a wide variety of contexts, and that there is no good reason to single out any one context, such as mother-child play, as especially valuable.' (p.76). They warn however, that home life does not 'automatically' provide 'rich learning experiences', and acknowledge that 'very depressed mothers or some childminders... may have little commitment to education.' (p.77). They also stress that most of the learning that takes place in the home is at the level of 'general knowledge' rather than the narrower focus of homework topics from the national curriculum and national tests. Moll et al (1992), in their reflections within a study of household activities and their impact on learning, link this potential in the home to the school classroom when they argue that 'every household is, in a very real sense, an educational setting in which the major function is to transmit knowledge that enhances the survival of its dependants' (p.320). They argue that the home is a 'fund of knowledge' which if mobilised 'can transform classrooms into more advanced contexts for teaching and learning' (p.344).

Desforges and Abouchar (2003) found that parental involvement takes place in various ways, ranging from providing role models and expectations for children, and sharing information with schools, to attending school events and participating in school governance. Their review of current research, commissioned by the DfES, shows that forms of involvement are influenced by social class, maternal level of education, material deprivation, maternal psycho-social health, and single parent status and, to a lesser degree, by family ethnicity. The review also suggests that the level of involvement is related to both the child's age and attainment. The review's main finding however, suggests that 'parental involvement in the form of "at-home good parenting" has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment'. This is stronger than any other form of parental involvement, 'even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation' (2003, p.4). This suggests that 'parenting has its influence indirectly through shaping the child's self concept as a learner and through setting high aspirations' rather than through working directly with schools (Desforges and Abouchar 2003: 5; see also Pollard and Filer, above). Dunn also emphasises the importance of understanding the parent-child

relationship and its impact on education, and argues that programmes developed to foster parental involvement should incorporate an understanding of the degree of complexity in parent-child relationships (Dunn 1993). However Hughes and Kwok (2007), in research conducted in the US, argue that it is the relationship between teachers and parents (and between teachers and students) that is the important factor in the home-school interface. They argue that the almost exclusive emphasis placed on increasing parental involvement can be at the expense of better home-school relations. They suggest that strategies for helping teachers connect with students and their parents are therefore fundamental.

While Desforges and Abouchaar documented a range of interventions to promote parental involvement (for example parent training courses, initiatives to promote home-school relations) their review found that there was insufficient evidence on the effectiveness of different modes of intervention and they identified the need for future research to focus on good practice. The ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme contains one such study, The Home School Knowledge Exchange (HSKE). Hughes and Greenhough (2006) argue that while much emphasis has been placed on two way communication between schools and homes, in practice much of this is just 'one-way traffic' (p.72). 'While it is relatively common for schools to provide parents with information about school activities and events, it is much less common for schools to seek out parents' perspectives or knowledge' (p.472). The form and content of home-school communication appear to be largely determined by schools, and there are few mechanisms in place to discover parental concerns. While emphasis has been placed on giving 'voice' to parents, control over what they are told and what they can say is still largely with schools which often have highly institutionalised mechanisms in place to communicate with parents. As part of their study, the researchers conducted activities to 'encourage communication between home and school'. The activities aimed to help parents understand better the demands that schools place on their children, and teachers to gain a better understanding of their students 'out of school interests and pursuits' (Hughes and Greenhough 2006: 481). The research highlighted the considerable variation in form that the activities took in the different schools, and drew the conclusion that context is highly important and has to be acknowledged when thinking about common strategies for generating better practices of home-school communication. In exploring their findings, the researchers used Moll and Greenberg's concept of 'funds of knowledge' (1992) to highlight the existence of relevant knowledge in the home which can be used positively in more formal in-school learning activities. The study highlights the need to understand home-school communication as a complex process in which issues of power and control are present and shape the forms of communication, but it also offers strategies that can be deployed to strengthen home-school communication.

Again drawing from a study carried out as part of the HSKE project, Feiler et al (2006) show that when effective home-school communication is achieved 'the contribution that parents made to their child's learning was often rich and extensive' (p.465). However, like Dunn (1993), they caution that there is considerable heterogeneity within the parental body. Even within class and ethnic groups, individual parents have different communicational needs. They suggest that schools need to deploy better strategies to find 'what kind of activities and support may be appropriate or helpful' (p.464) for different parent groups. Such strategies should also take into account that often parents do not have a clear understanding of what they can do to support their children's learning at home or even what information they need. The authors stress that a 'one size fits all' approach to home-school communication is inadequate and they advocate what they describe as a 'layered patchwork' approach, 'a range of actions that will include different participants at different times in different ways' (p.465). However, they warn of the risks of stereotyping through the use of such judgemental terms as 'hard to reach parents'.

This call for a 'patchwork approach' is at odds with the general view on the part of government which seems to be that 'more is better' in terms of homework, without much consideration of the complexities of the different conditions in the home and the possible effects of these on children's learning. This is evident for example in the attempts to ensure that the completion of homework 'becomes a matter for contractual agreement between schools and parents-as-consumers', in which the child appears to be a 'passive consumer' (Smith 2000: 322). Hoover-Dempsey et al (2001) present a comprehensive discussion of studies carried out in recent years into the role of homework and of parents in relation to it. The studies include analyses of parental motivations to get involved in homework; student perceptions and feelings about homework; the influence of socio-economic variables on parents' involvement in homework; and home-school communications about homework. Drawing from the findings of such research, the authors identify three main reasons for parental involvement: parents believe that they should be involved; they think they can make a positive contribution to their children's learning; and they perceive invitations to become more involved. The authors highlight the importance of how parents construct their role in their children's education, which is done partly on the basis of personal experience. In this sense, greater parental confidence about the positive impact of their involvement makes them take a more active role in relation to homework. Supporting Epstein's ideas, the review argues that invitations from schools can have a stronger impact on involvement than parents' socio-economic status. It suggests that parental involvement in homework is varied and tends to fall within Epstein's categories of 'basic obligations' where parents merely comply with school requirements, although 'involvement' suggests more active participation. At the same time, there is evidence that the way in which parental involvement in homework influences student outcomes is by offering 'modelling, reinforcement, and instruction that supports the development of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours associated with successful school performance' (Hoover-Dempsey et al 2001: 203).

It has been suggested that increasing availability and access to technologies and educational materials in the future could make a distinct contribution to home-school relationships. Bauch (1997) suggests that new communications technologies can be positively used to enhance the flow of information between schools, students and their parents. However, in a study of computer use at home and in school, Kerawalla and Crook (2002) showed that while the increasing presence of computers in British homes has created greater expectations as to the contribution they can make to children's learning, in reality the home use of computers is more general than it is in schools and the contribution to school learning is small. The most common home use for computers is games playing, with educational uses being much less frequent. Similar findings have been encountered in the US context, where it was evident that many parents did not have the resources or the knowledge to promote better, more school-oriented uses of home computers. However, the authors were critical of how the surge of new technologies has been hailed as a 'potential resource for blending the activities of home life and school life' (Kerawalla and Crook 2002: 752). The reality that they found showed strong discontinuities between school and home in terms of computer use and the context in which computers are found. Availability was often greater at home than in school, and parents' use of computers as an educational tool was more limited. Many parents appeared to be uncomfortable in taking on a 'teaching' role with their children, and were concerned about the implications of 'importing the classroom into the home' (Kerawalla and Crook 2002: 769). At the same time, many parents seemed to expect that the educational effects of computers would occur 'spontaneously'. They comment on the apparent gaps between the ecologies of the home and the school with respect to computer use; consequently few schools promote initiatives for ICT use in fostering better home-school

links. However, the authors cite some existing projects in the UK (such as at the Highdown School in Berkshire) and in the US where computers have successfully been used to foster better home-school links.

Conclusion

The changing patterns of parenting and child care present significant challenges for the primary school. The diversity in family structure brings with it complex administrative demands for home-school communication, and a complex array of family relationships for schools to understand and work with. Children living in mixed and 'beanpole' families may be ahead of their teachers in learning to manage different attitudes and expectations of their family members in relation to schooling. Further research is needed into the lives of these children and how their complex family relations, and the caring roles which many children undertake themselves, impact on their education.

The school remains a primary source of community-based support for working parents and carers, as the impact of complex employment arrangements adds to the demands for child care support beyond the school day. There are both constraints and opportunities within these changing circumstances for greater parental involvement in schools. Flexible working hours can mean either more or less time for involvement in school activities. Shared caring and the diversity of family structures can both impoverish and enrich the lives of children. Research has presented examples of good practice in these areas and there are optimistic projects on which to build, but more research is needed to reveal the impact of these changes. The most challenging home circumstance, which cannot be viewed optimistically, is the increasing number of children living in relative poverty. Poverty remains a significant factor in the lives of many children, with the inevitable impact in terms of health and wellbeing and a child's capacity to engage fully in school activities (both financially and emotionally). This is also an area where further research is needed in order to document and evaluate the many new initiatives in this area and the changing circumstances of children.

The policy rhetoric speaks of a changing relationship between parents and schools but the reality may be somewhat different, there is little evidence of real change. Whilst policy has shifted from viewing parents as problems, to parents as customers, and more recently to parents as partners, the home-school relationship is really between individual parents and individual teachers who both have the interests of an individual child at heart. Just as parents are not a homogeneous group, neither are teachers and attempts to improve the relationship between both groups by re-defining the role of parent may prove to be counter-productive. Whilst parents often welcome advice as to how to help their children with school-focused work, too high an expectation of what is achievable can lead to pressure and guilt for some and resentment for others. Neither emotion is likely to enhance the relationships between parents and their children's teachers. Similarly, there is a fine line between respecting teachers' professionalism and merely adding to their work load.

Ways in which teachers can establish more fruitful links between home and school, as a resource for learning which capitalises on the 'funds of knowledge' within the home, could provide new challenges for schools. There is a shortage of research into the ways in which families support children's learning within the community through leisure, and even work-related activities. Research and development would be useful in this area and would be in line with the government's personalised learning agenda. The increase in new technologies for learning, web-based information gathering, and changing perspectives of shared knowledge suggest that such research would be both relevant and timely.

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APPENDIX 1

THE PRIMARY REVIEW PERSPECTIVES, THEMES AND SUB THEMES

The Primary Review's enquiries are framed by three broad perspectives, the third of which, primary education, breaks down into ten themes and 23 sub-themes. Each of the latter then generates a number of questions. The full framework of review perspectives, themes and questions is at www.primaryreview.org.uk

The Review Perspectives

- P1 Children and childhood
- P2 Culture, society and the global context
- P3 Primary education

The Review Themes and Sub-themes

- T1 Purposes and values**
 - T1a Values, beliefs and principles
 - T1b Aims
- T2 Learning and teaching**
 - T2a Children's development and learning
 - T2b Teaching
- T3 Curriculum and assessment**
 - T3a Curriculum
 - T3b Assessment
- T4 Quality and standards**
 - T4a Standards
 - T4b Quality assurance and inspection
- T5 Diversity and inclusion**
 - T5a Culture, gender, race, faith
 - T5b Special educational needs
- T6 Settings and professionals**
 - T6a Buildings and resources
 - T6b Teacher supply, training, deployment & development
 - T6c Other professionals
 - T6d School organisation, management & leadership
 - T6e School culture and ethos
- T7 Parenting, caring and educating**
 - T7a Parents and carers
 - T7b Home and school
- T8 Beyond the school**
 - T8a Children's lives beyond the school
 - T8b Schools and other agencies
- T9 Structures and phases**
 - T9a Within-school structures, stages, classes & groups
 - T9b System-level structures, phases & transitions
- T10 Funding and governance**
 - T10a Funding
 - T10b Governance

APPENDIX 2

THE EVIDENTIAL BASIS OF THE PRIMARY REVIEW

The Review has four evidential strands. These seek to balance opinion seeking with empirical data; non-interactive expressions of opinion with face-to-face discussion; official data with independent research; and material from England with that from other parts of the UK and from international sources. This enquiry, unlike some of its predecessors, looks outwards from primary schools to the wider society, and makes full though judicious use of international data and ideas from other countries.

Submissions

Following the convention in enquiries of this kind, submissions have been invited from all who wish to contribute. By June 2007, nearly 550 submissions had been received and more were arriving daily. The submissions range from brief single-issue expressions of opinion to substantial documents covering several or all of the themes and comprising both detailed evidence and recommendations for the future. A report on the submissions will be published in late 2007.

Soundings

This strand has two parts. The *Community Soundings* are a series of nine regionally based one to two day events, each comprising a sequence of meetings with representatives from schools and the communities they serve. The Community Soundings took place between January and March 2007, and entailed 87 witness sessions with groups of pupils, parents, governors, teachers, teaching assistants and heads, and with educational and community representatives from the areas in which the soundings took place. In all, there were over 700 witnesses. The *National Soundings* are a programme of more formal meetings with national organisations both inside and outside education. They will take place during autumn 2007 and will explore key issues arising from the full range of data thus far. They will aim to help the team to clarify matters which are particularly problematic or contested and to confirm the direction to be taken by the final report. As a subset of the National Soundings, a group of practitioners - the *Visionary and Innovative Practice (VIP) group* – is giving particular attention to the implications of the emerging evidence for the work of primary schools.

Surveys

30 surveys of published research relating to the Review's ten themes have been commissioned from 69 academic consultants in universities in Britain and other countries. The surveys relate closely to the ten Review themes and the complete list appears in Appendix 3. Taken together, they will provide the most comprehensive review of research relating to primary education yet undertaken. They will be published in thematic groups from October 2007 onwards.

Searches

With the co-operation of DfES/DCSF, QCA, Ofsted, TDA and OECD, the Review is re-assessing a range of official data bearing on the primary phase. This will provide the necessary demographic, financial and statistical background to the Review and an important resource for its later consideration of policy options.

Other meetings

In addition to the formal evidence-gathering procedures, the Review team meets members of various national bodies for the exchange of information and ideas: government and opposition representatives; officials at DfES/DCSF, QCA, Ofsted, TDA, GTC, NCSL and IRU; representatives of the teaching unions; and umbrella groups representing organisations involved in early years, primary education and teacher education. The first of three sessions with the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee took place in March 2007. Following the replacement of DfES by two separate departments, DCSF and DIUS, it is anticipated that there will be further meetings with this committee's successor.

APPENDIX 3

THE PRIMARY REVIEW INTERIM REPORTS

The interim reports, which will be released in stages from October 2007, include the 30 research surveys commissioned from external consultants together with reports on the community soundings and the submissions prepared by the Cambridge team. They are listed by Review theme below, although this will not be the order of their publication. Report titles may be subject to minor amendment.

Once published, the interim reports, together with briefings summarising their findings, may be downloaded from the Review website, www.primaryreview.org.uk.

1. *Community Soundings: report on the Primary Review regional witness sessions*
2. *Submissions received by the Primary Review*
3. *Aims and values in primary education. Research survey 1/1 (John White)*
4. *The aims of primary education: England and other countries. Research survey 1/2 (Maha Shuayb and Sharon O'Donnell)*
5. *The changing national context of primary education. Research survey 1/3 (Stephen Machin and Sandra McNally)*
6. *The changing global context of primary education. Research survey 1/4 (Hugh Lauder, John Lowe and Dr Rita Chawla-Duggan)*
7. *Children in primary schools: cognitive development. Research survey 2/1a (Usha Goswami and Peter Bryant)*
8. *Children in primary schools: social development and learning. Research survey 2/1b (Christine Howe and Neil Mercer)*
9. *Teaching in primary schools. Research survey 2/2 (Robin Alexander and Maurice Galton)*
10. *Learning and teaching in primary schools: the curriculum dimension. Research survey 2/3 (Bob McCormick and Bob Moon)*
11. *Learning and teaching in primary schools: evidence from TLRP. Research survey 2/4 (Mary James and Andrew Pollard)*
12. *Curriculum and assessment policy: England and other countries. Research survey 3/1 (Kathy Hall and Kamil Øzerk)*
13. *The impact of national reform: recent government initiatives in English primary education. Research survey 3/2 (Dominic Wyse, Elaine McCreery and Harry Torrance)*
14. *Curriculum alternatives for primary education. Research survey 3/3 (James Conroy and Ian Menter)*
15. *The quality of learning: assessment alternatives for primary education. Research survey 3/4 (Wynne Harlen)*
16. *Standards and quality in English primary schools over time: the national evidence. Research survey 4/1 (Peter Tymms and Christine Merrell)*
17. *Standards in English primary schools: the international evidence. Research survey 4/2 (Chris Whetton, Graham Ruddock and Liz Twist).*
18. *Quality assurance in primary education. Research survey 4/1 (Peter Cunningham and Philip Raymont)*
19. *Children, identity, diversity and inclusion in primary education. Research survey 5/1 (Mel Ainscow, Alan Dyson and Jean Conteh)*
20. *Children of primary school age with special needs: identification and provision. Research survey 5/2 (Harry Daniels and Jill Porter)*

21. *Children and their primary education: pupil voice*. Research survey 5/3 (Carol Robinson and Michael Fielding)
22. *Primary education: the physical environment*. Research survey 6/1 (Karl Wall, Julie Dockrell and Nick Peacey)
23. *Primary education: the professional environment*. Research survey 6/2 (Ian Stronach, Andy Pickard and Elizabeth Jones)
24. *Teachers and other professionals: training, induction and development*. Research survey 6/3 (Olwen McNamara, Rosemary Webb and Mark Brundrett)
25. *Teachers and other professionals: workforce management and reform*. Research survey 6/4 (Hilary Burgess)
26. *Parenting, caring and educating*. Research survey 7/1 (Yolande Muschamp, Felicity Wikeley, Tess Ridge and Maria Balarin)
27. *Children's lives outside school and their educational impact*. Research survey 8/1 (Berry Mayall)
28. *Primary schools and other agencies*. Research survey 8/2 (Ian Barron, Rachel Holmes, Maggie MacLure and Katherine Runswick-Cole)
29. *The structure and phasing of primary education: England and other countries*. Research survey 9/1 (Anna Eames and Caroline Sharp)
30. *Organising learning and teaching in primary schools: structure, grouping and transition*. Research survey 9/2 (Peter Blatchford, Judith Ireson, Susan Hallam, Peter Kutnick and Andrea Creech)
31. *The financing of primary education*. Research survey 10/1 (Philip Noden and Anne West)
32. *The governance, administration and control of primary education*. Research survey 10/2 (Maria Balarin and Hugh Lauder)



... children, their world, their education

The Primary Review is a wide-ranging independent enquiry into the condition and future of primary education in England. It is supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, based at the University of Cambridge and directed by Robin Alexander. The Review was launched in October 2006 and aims to publish its final report in autumn 2008.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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