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Sats review panel: 'deeply disappointing'

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Primary expert slams group tasked with reforming KS2 tests

The influential panel appointed by the Government to review key stage 2 tests lacks expertise in assessment, according to one of the country's foremost primary education experts.

Robin Alexander, director of the Cambridge Primary Review, said he was "deeply disappointed" by the panel's make-up, which was announced last week.

Speaking at London University's Institute of Education, Professor Alexander said he was pleased a review was taking place. But he added: "I'm deeply disappointed that not one of the country's acknowledged assessment experts is on the panel.

"Organisations like the Assessment Reform Group have done a great deal of work on reliable alternatives to current arrangements, and their expertise should be tapped."



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Despite his concerns, Professor Alexander, who also recommended reform of key stage 2 assessment, called on people to contribute to the review and not prejudge it.

The Government announced that it will be headed by Lord Bew, a cross-bench peer and professor of Irish politics. He will be assisted by a panel of eight people including Ruth Miskin, founder of the phonics programme Read Write Inc, and Miriam Rosen, former executive director of Ofsted.

There are also five primary headteachers and a secondary head on the panel. Two of the heads were involved in the boycott of KS2 tests earlier this year, which was supported by 26 per cent of primaries.

Colin Richards, emeritus professor at the University of Cumbria, also raised concerns. "The spectrum of views and expertise on assessment in primary education is not adequately represented on that panel," he said. "It should have at least one or two people with a deep knowledge or practical experience of assessment."

Heads' union the NAHT, which called off a repeat of this year's boycott pending the review, has welcomed the panel. But teaching union the NUT, which backed the boycott, said it was disappointed that there are no classroom teachers among the group.

Christine Blower, NUT general secretary, said: "It is encouraging that the Government has recognised that we need an alternative to the present assessment regime. However, it is regrettable that practising classroom teachers are not represented on the panel."

Wayne Howsen, head of St Catherine's CofE Primary School in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, who has vowed to hold a wildcat boycott of Sats next year, agreed with the NUT.

"Although I'm a head who works in the classroom, I am removed from the day-to-day practice and I think Year 6 teachers should also be involved," he said. "We can all respond to inquiries but it is the people on the panel who are listened to, and they need to be people with credible, recent experience of assessing children."

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The key stage 2 assessment panel will investigate a number of issues, including how to avoid the risk of “perverse incentives” that lead to a narrow curriculum and teaching to the test.

It will also look at ways of ensuring schools are properly held to account for the progress of pupils and parents having access to good-quality information, and how to avoid “crude” judgments of school performance.

A 12-week call for evidence will be launched soon, with a final report expected in June 2011.

- *Original headline: Alexander: Sats review panel is ‘deeply disappointing’*

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If they come out with anything about 21st century Sats, then they know little or nothing about NC assessment.

Simple fact: Standard Assessment Tasks finished in 1991.

i guess they'd only get a mention now if there were journalists or certain ordinary classroom teachers on the panel.

Most know better.

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15:46
15 November,
2010

markuss

Images



This is pretty rich--our testing arrangements have been in shambles for years, simply because New Labour relied upon "acknowledged assessment experts". Their crowning glory was the 'single-level tests', which ended in fiasco.



13:21
17 November,
2010

Promethean

Now, we have a panel consisting of some of the most successful primary head teachers England has ever produced. Yet all of the 'experts' are crying foul. Never has there been a clearer demonstration of the huge gulf between the educational establishment and the teachers who actually have to face kids every school day.

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Why surprise about no classroom teachers on the panel? Whenever has anyone listened to those who have recent credible experience?

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13:47
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[guinnesspuss](#)

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