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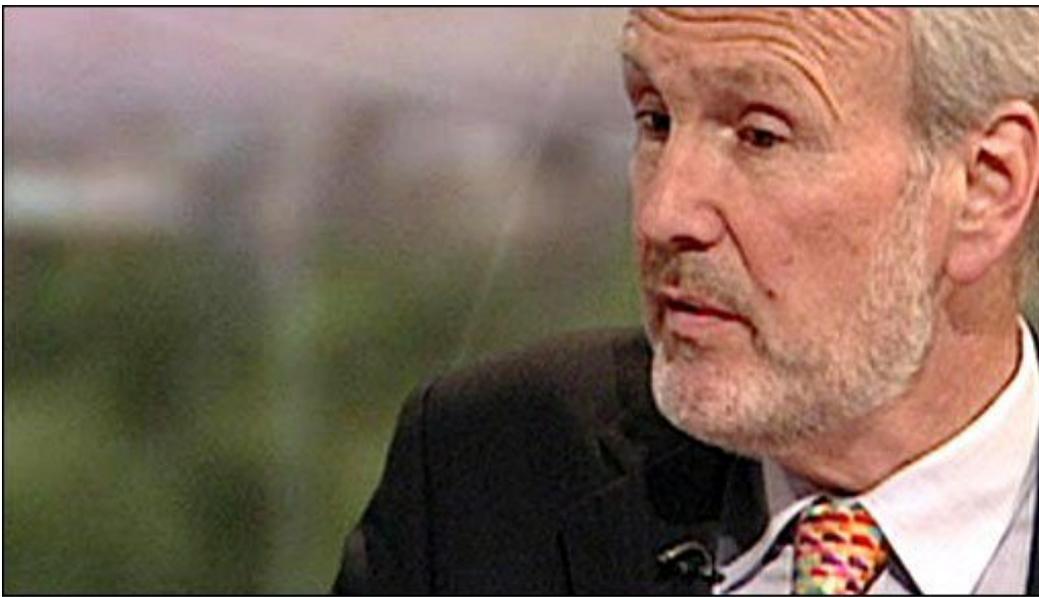


## Top primary don warns Michael Gove: "Insulting opponents is the real 'enemy of progress'"

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*Prof Robin Alexander*

Teachers have more power than they realise to resist government reforms to primary education, Professor Robin Alexander, author of a wide-ranging review into primary education, has said.

The respected academic, who led the **Cambridge Primary Review** – a three-year analysis of all aspects of primary education published in 2009 - attacked the current "discourse of derision" in which the government denounced those who disagree with its ideas as the real "enemy of progress".

He was referring to a recent argument over the review of the national curriculum in which 100 academics curriculum proposals as an "endless lists of spellings, facts and rules" and were in turn denounced as "enemies of promise" in a **newspaper article** written by education secretary Michael Gove.

Professor Alexander said at an event in London last night: "It's surely proper to ask whether heaping abuse on members of the electorate because they hold different views is what government in a democracy is about.

"It is especially bafflingly during a period of public consultation when different views are what the government has expressly invited."

Alexander is no fan of the current coalition government's national curriculum review, saying it uses international data with 'eye-watering selectivity'.

Alexander's Cambridge Primary Review contained 75 recommendations but just

one - start formal lessons at six - made the headlines, and the report was consequently largely **dismissed** by the then Labour government and had commissioned its own overhaul of the primary curriculum.

But he pointed out that many of the 2009 report's recommendations did not need government action, they could be and were being, implemented by headteachers and teachers themselves.

Alexander was speaking at the launch of the **Cambridge Primary Review Trust**, a not-for-profit company with core funding from educational publisher Pearson. The trust, based at York University, will carry out research and training building on the review's evidence and principles. There will also be a separate body to develop branded professional services and materials for schools.

The launch event included a panel debate, *Any Primary Questions?*, which was chaired by broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby. Graham Stuart, chair of the Commons education select committee, was one of the panellists. He said afterwards that he felt more political attention had been focused on secondary than primary issues.

"It is important that primary community speaks up, rather than despairing of politics," Stuart said. "One of the priorities of The Cambridge Primary Trust is a policy dialogue and the Trust could become a strong advocate for the world of primary."

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