



Favourites

Login/Register

Help

Contact Us

## CEN News

News Home

City, Royston & Saffron Walden

Ely

Huntingdon & St Ives

Newmarket & Haverhill

Region-wide

Messageboards

Blogs/Columns

In Depth

Features

Letters

Search Archive

Free RSS Feeds

Weather

E-Editions

## CEN Sport

## CEN Business

## CEN Lifestyle

## CEN Marketplace

## CEN People

## CEN Quicklinks

# Report says primary pupils 'stressed out'

## Top Cambridge Day School

Discover a love of learning Call now to arrange a visit  
www.Perse.Cambs.sch.uk

UNDER excessive pressure to succeed and worried about the modern world our primary school children are stressed out.

That is the finding of a report led by a team of experts at Cambridge University who are carrying out the biggest study into primary school education for 40 years.

It described 11-year-olds as scared by the prospect of exams and youngsters fearful of climate change, terrorism and their personal safety.

And its findings were no surprise to Charles Watson, headteacher at The Grove Primary School, Arbury, Cambridge.

He said: "Children generally feel under pressure because the worries and concerns of parents filter down to them.

"They are more aware of what's happening in the world because of technology - the internet and television brings it to their doorstep.

"Children are pressurised like they have never been before at primary school. Schools are under pressure to deliver government targets and that translates into how the curriculum is delivered.

"The pressure schools are under is sent downwards to children because of pressure to meet targets. It's an unfortunate fact of life both in schools and in the world around them."

Mr Watson continued: "Children should not worry about these things. There's a danger of children missing out on their childhood."

He added only time will tell how the anxieties children suffer when they are younger will affect them as adults.

The Primary Review's independently-funded report carried findings not only of experiences of children, but also of parents and teachers.

Coun Jill Tuck, cabinet member for children and young people's services, has just attended a conference of Cambridgeshire's primary school headteachers and said they are well aware children are under pressure at school.

She said: "We accept there's pressure at home with GCSEs but we forget younger children and the pressure they are under."

The councillor said there needs to be a greater emphasis on children meeting personal goals, rather than those set for them by government targets.

"There are children who are less academically bright," she said. "But that does not mean they are going to be bad citizens. It should be about everyone reaching their own potential, not about ticking boxes. It's important children feel comfortable about what they have achieved.

"From discussions I have had with heads, I do not think they have lost sight of that, but they are under pressure to meet targets. Some heads are a little frustrated that's the way things have gone."

But Coun Tuck did express surprise at children having anxieties about the world around them.

She said: "Clearly, some of these children feel the world is a scary place. What worries me is does that inhibit them from doing all the things we used to do as children? We need to have more discussion about that."

## Also in section

Guided bus works to cause village chaos  
Burning a hole in vital resource  
Progress at Stansted expansion scheme

## Online Poll

Have you ever cheated on a partner?

- No  
 Yes

vote

Bright Spark Recruitment

Ads by Google

## Local Website Designer

Tailored, original, cost effective website design and development  
[motivateddesign.co.uk](http://motivateddesign.co.uk)

[Advertise on this site](#)

Lisa Burton, former member of the Parent Teacher Association at St Mary's School, St Neots, said she does not believe all children are anxious and said their stress levels are determined not only by their personalities, but how they receive information from parents and teachers.

She has three children, aged one, eight and 11, and said the experiences of her two elder children at primary school have been very different.

Making exams fun is one way of making them less stressful, she said, but she acknowledged exams can put some children under pressure.

She said: "I would prefer it if SATs were scrapped in favour of a system more like the NVQ where there is continuous assessment throughout the year. For less able children, that would be better."

Dr Richard Margreave, director of communications for The Primary Review, said: "If the report seems alarmist that reflects the level of concern there is. But if you look at the report, you will see children are much more sanguine. Among the adult population, there are some very real fears.

"Children are aware of the big issues, but they are also concerned with things like whether a male teacher picks on girls or a female teacher picks on boys, what you would describe as children's issues."

The report, Community Surroundings, is the first of 32 interim reports to be released by The Primary Review before next autumn when it will publish its recommendations.

Its authors hope by publishing their findings now they will spark discussion across England about the lives and education of future generations.

For more information visit [www.primaryreview.org.uk](http://www.primaryreview.org.uk)

13 October 2007

The logo for Cambridge Evening News, featuring the word "Cambridge" in a small font above the words "Evening News" in a larger, bold, serif font.

[Back to top](#)

All original material on this page unless specified by another URL is the property of Cambridge Newspapers Ltd ©2005 and may not be reproduced without permission. Cambridge Newspapers is not responsible for the content of any external links. Cambridge Newspapers is registered in England and Wales No. 240968

As of 22nd February 2007, Illiffe News & Media is Registered with ABC Electronic and supports industry agreed standards for website traffic measurement.