

7 July 2010

Ms Julie Bramman
Deputy Director
Primary Education Division
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Dear Julie,

SEN ENQUIRY

Thank you for giving the Cambridge Primary Review (CPR) the opportunity to bring its relevant findings to the attention of those undertaking the Department's new SEN enquiry.

Below you will find the formal conclusion and recommendations which our final report made on this matter. You will see that we recommended an SEN review and therefore are pleased that one has been announced. We also raised contingent concerns about teacher training.

At an early stage the CPR commissioned two surveys of published research bearing on this matter. The first, by a group at Manchester University headed by Professor Mel Ainscow, looked at policy and practice relating to pupils deemed to have particular needs, special or otherwise. The second, by Professor Harry Daniels and Dr Jill Porter from Bath University, considered the more particular question of children with special educational needs. The two reviews are short and condensed, but they cover a considerable body of published research. They were first published separately as interim CPR reports in 2007-8 and were later revised for publication in the companion volume to our final report, *The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys*. I know there are several copies of the CPR final report in the Department, but there may not be a copy of the research surveys volume. My colleague Julia Flutter will therefore copy and forward these chapters to you, together with the introduction to that section of the book since it places SEN questions in the broader context of the CPR's work on childhood.

The evidence from the commissioned research surveys was later combined with evidence from our other sources – formal written submissions (including several from organisations with an interest in SEN), the regional and national soundings, and searches of official data. The outcomes of this synthesis appear as chapters 8 ('Children, diversity and equity') and 9 ('Children with special needs') in our final report, *Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review*. Again, Julia Flutter will send you these chapters. I hope that the entire package – this letter and the five extracts – can then be passed to the secretariat of the SEN enquiry.

Yours sincerely,



The Cambridge Primary Review is supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Robin Alexander (Director), Julia Flutter (Dissemination Co-ordinator), Alison Peacock (Network Leader)

Professor Robin Alexander
Director, the Cambridge Primary Review

cc: Julia Flutter
Alison Peacock
Dame Gillian Pugh

Extracts from: Alexander, R.J. (ed) (2009) *Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review*, Routledge, p 490.

18. Nearly a fifth of all primary pupils are identified as having special educational needs, 1.4 per cent of them severe enough to merit an official statement of those needs and how they should be met. The Review identified serious concerns about how well the system identifies and caters for these children. Too often, needs classifications appear arbitrary rather than considered, and result in stereotyping and discrimination. There is excessive local variation in funding and provision for children whose needs are defined as ‘special’, and deep frustration among parents and teachers, and in some local authorities, about the inadequacy of available support. There is also a serious and long-standing tension between the desire to respond effectively to particular needs and a reluctance to label or pigeon-hole such children. Acceptance of the basic rights and principles of inclusion has not always been matched by appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes.

...

20. Teachers’ initial training and continuing professional development should devote greater attention than at present to the facts, dilemmas, opportunities and challenges of diversity and difference. It should seek to promote equal valuing and treatment of all children at school, especially in relation to ethnicity, gender and special needs, and to counter stereotyping and prejudice. Equity should be fundamental to professional consciousness and action, as well as to public policy.

21. In the light of serious concerns about statementing and the limitations and constraints of the current system of providing for children identified as having special educational needs, and in the context of efforts to create a genuinely inclusive and personalised approach to learning for all children, we endorse the view of former Secretary of State Estelle Morris that there should be a full SEN review. This should cover definitions, structures, procedures and provision in the field of special educational needs, and proper debate on the meaning and practicality of inclusive education.

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