

# Network News

*From the Cambridge Primary Review*

*May 2011*

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## THE NETWORK GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

**Alison Peacock, CPR Network Leader, writes:** In a new era of partnership working, the network aims to support high quality professional learning and empowerment. We are building an influential group of colleagues who are committed to exploring research evidence and reflecting on leadership and classroom practice to enable the best possible learning to take place in our primary schools. It has been such a privilege to meet so many people across the country who are committed to improving primary education. As I participate in network events regionally and nationally, it is clear that a groundswell of optimism is forming that by working together, we can make a difference for all children. **Please let us know how the CPR network can support your professional learning.** You are welcome to email me directly - [alisonpeacock@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:alisonpeacock@primaryreview.org.uk) - and I would welcome your ideas and comments, as would the regional co-ordinators listed later in this newsletter. You may also wish to follow CPR quotes on [twitter@CPRnet](https://twitter.com/CPRnet). We look forward to hearing from you.

## THE POLICY CONTEXT: IT'S REVIEW TIME AGAIN

**Robin Alexander, CPR Director, writes:** The Tickell review of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has published its report. Curiously, it managed to avoid mentioning the CPR's proposal to extend the EYFS to age 6 that provoked such widespread interest (and misreporting) back in October 2009. Following the coalition government's rejection of Labour's Rose framework for the primary curriculum, the first phase of consultation on the new National Curriculum review opened in January and ended on 14 April, and the CPR was among those that gave both oral and written evidence - as it did to Lord Bew's review of Key Stage 2 assessment, Sally Coates' review of the government's professional standards for teachers and the consultation on Ofsted's proposed new school inspection arrangements. Meanwhile, the CPR has been closely involved in the DfE's in-house investigation of primary schools' capacity to plan and teach a broad curriculum to a high standard in all its aspects, a matter which raises important questions about subject expertise, teachers' roles, school leadership, initial training and CPD.

It is pleasing that all these enquiries were recommended in the CPR's final report, and while some were probably on the cards anyway - the coalition government has been keen to signal that it won't necessarily be bound by the policies of its predecessor - we believe that the curriculum capacity study wouldn't have happened without the CPR's advocacy, for this is an issue which we pressed hard but successive governments have avoided, except in relation to specific subjects like maths and science. On the other hand, apart from Tickell we don't yet know where this enquiry or any of the reviews will lead.

Meanwhile, we've raised urgent questions about the assumptions and methods of the National Curriculum Review, especially in relation to children's need at the primary stage for a broad and well-taught foundation for their lifelong learning and future educational choices, the absence of debate about educational aims to steer decisions about what counts as the 'core of essential knowledge', and ways that international comparison should and should not be used to inform national policy.

For the moment, then, there's everything to play for, but what must at all costs be avoided is wait-and-see passivity. Many teachers are cynical about government consultations, pointing to exercises where

government-preferred outcomes are built into the remit of reviews bearing the label ‘independent’, or where final reports are written long before the close of public consultation. In the case of the National Curriculum Review, the consultation form was something of a tick-box nightmare and this seems to have discouraged the faint-hearted. But for a profession anxious to recover lost freedoms, waiting to be told what to do is not an option. Consultations are more likely to make a difference if they are articulate, informed, vigorous and public, so that participants talk to each other about the issues rather than privately to DfE or not at all. Building such a community of discourse and action is what the CPR Network is all about. We said in the final CPR report, and we repeat it here: ‘Children will not learn to think for themselves if their teachers are expected merely to do as they are told.’

You can download the CPR’s evidence to the official reviews that have been launched so far, together with related articles and speeches, at [www.primaryreview.org.uk](http://www.primaryreview.org.uk). Information about the reviews themselves - remit, timetable, consultation process and so on - is at [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk).

## NEWS FROM THE REGIONAL CENTRES

Higher education institutions around the country have joined us in the task of putting the CPR’s vision into practice and re-invigorating localism in curriculum and educational decision-making. Here we meet the co-ordinators leading these regional centres and hear how they are taking forward the CPR’s principles, ideas and recommendations for primary education. There are now twelve regional centres - contact details appear below. Some have held their launch events and have embarked on their longer term programmes. The others will launch shortly.

### London

**Sara Bubb** from the Institute of Education has recently been appointed as co-ordinator of the London regional centre. The centre’s core aim is to re-empower teachers and to improve the primary education experienced by children through the development of supportive practitioner networks. The centre’s launch event, *Making the Most of New Freedoms in Primary Education*, is being held on **Monday 6 June, from 2 - 5 pm at the Institute of Education** and is open to all schools, educators, organisations and students. This event includes contributions from Robin Alexander (the CPR’s director) and Alison Peacock (CPR national network leader), together with opportunities for focussed discussions on key issues connected with the CPR recommendations. The event will also provide a platform for initiating the development of local networks. For details about the London centre and the launch event booking please contact Sara Bubb [sarabubb@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:sarabubb@primaryreview.org.uk).

### North East

**Kate Wall** (University of Durham) and **Elaine Hall** (Newcastle University) share responsibility for the jointly-hosted north east regional centre. Here Kate tells us about what’s been happening so far.

The north east regional centre’s launch event on **8 March** attracted a wide range of practitioners from across the region and a variety of different organisations and perspectives. The keynote contributions were well received and conversations stimulated by the showcase of practice sparked much enthusiasm. PowerPoint presentations from the day can now be downloaded from the Research Centre for Learning and Teaching website: [www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/news/CPR](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/news/CPR)

***Scoping events and Learning Walks – under way!*** A series of monthly scoping events exploring each of the 12 aims for primary education proposed in the CPR’s final report (pages 197-199) has been scheduled. The aim is to prompt discussion and the sharing of experience about the meaning and implementation of these key elements in the CPR’s vision for a better primary education for all children. Network members are invited to bring a piece of evidence from their school which they believe encapsulates a particular aim (this could be video, a child’s work, planning documents or other materials). These resources will be the centre of a discussion to explore areas of commonality and difference when putting the CPR’s ideas into practice. The first of these events, on the aim of **wellbeing** (‘To attend to children’s capabilities, needs, hopes and anxieties here and now, and promote their mental, emotional and physical well-being and welfare ...’) took place in Newcastle on **4 April** and the

second, on **encouraging respect and reciprocity**, took place in Durham on **4 May**. The full schedule can be seen at: [www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/news/CPR](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/news/CPR)<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/news/CPR>.

A series of **Learning Walks** will complement the scoping events. A learning walk should provide learning for the host institution as well as for visitors. The hosts will pose one or two key questions for their visitors which they believe will give them helpful feedback and the visitors will get the opportunity to learn professionally from each other as well as the host organisation. The first of these will take place at Murton Community Primary School on **14 June** with these questions in view: 'How does our environment support, or how could it be improved to support, our curricular goals?' 'Are levels of progression evident throughout the school?' 'Is there sufficient evidence of non-negotiable skills being taught, used and applied across the school?' 'To what extent does the use of ICT underpin the curriculum?' Outcomes from scoping events and learning walks will be posted on the website, so do join the discussion.

### North West

**Nadine Baker** from the Faculty of Education at Edge Hill University is co-ordinating the North West regional centre. On **28 February** the centre launched with a highly successful conference, addressed by Robin Alexander and Alison Peacock and attended by over 100 delegates from schools, local authorities and higher education institutions in the area. Currently the centre is focusing on three areas of development: (i) an online network for local members to share information and ideas on common issues of interest; (ii) an action research project with a small group of local schools across the north west exploring the use of technology in supporting best practice for formative assessment; (iii) conferences and other events promoting dissemination and discussion based on the CPR recommendations.

The next event will be the **Wigan Head Teachers' Forum on 13 May**, with Alison Peacock and regional co-ordinator Nadine Baker: for further details please contact Nadine [nadinebaker@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:nadinebaker@primaryreview.org.uk)

### East Midlands

The East Midlands regional centre, hosted by Bishop Grosseteste University College and co-ordinated by **Jane Johnston**, aims to engage with individual professionals, primary schools, HEIs and local authorities interested in the CPR principles and recommendations. The centre is particularly keen to respond to the needs of rural communities in the east midlands region. Plans for the centre include:

- identification of interested parties and setting up of regional working groups;
- engagement with professionals in debate and discussion through group meetings, regional conferences, virtual discussion and other activities;
- support for postgraduate professional development of teachers, linked to CPR activities, through the University College's MA in Education programme;
- research and development on the CPR's priorities;
- dissemination events, newsletters, web pages, research papers and conference presentations.

The launch of the East Midlands CPR Regional Network and Primary Partnership Conference takes place at Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln on **Tuesday 12 July** with keynote speaker Robin Alexander. For more information and to book a place contact [janejohnston@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:janejohnston@primaryreview.org.uk).

Colleagues in the East Midlands region have also grouped together to discuss a range of issues and have been involved in national consultations on maths education, drama in the primary school, early years science, music and spirituality. Some colleagues are undertaking research into some aspects of primary education which will be disseminated at future CPR network events. Events are being planned for 2011-12 and will be held in different venues round the region. Information about the centre and events in the region can be found at [http://www.bishopg.ac.uk/?\\_id=10601](http://www.bishopg.ac.uk/?_id=10601)

### East Anglia

Cambridge University's Faculty of Education hosts, alongside the CPR's national office, the eastern regional centre. Here **Penny Coltman**, the centre's co-ordinator, tells us about the launch event and plans for the future:

**April 6** saw the first major event for the Cambridge Eastern Region Network. In the inspirational setting of the Clore Learning Space at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford, near Cambridge, representatives gathered from a wide range of bodies involved in primary education. The event's theme was *Achieving Excellence through a Community Curriculum* and Robin Alexander's keynote address showed how the DfE's current national curriculum review provides opportunities to develop the CPR's idea of a community curriculum responsive to local needs and opportunities alongside the slimmed-down national curriculum. The day also included workshops on the community curriculum in practice. The Imperial War Museum education team explored approaches to empathetic creative writing through specific examples of communities in crisis. A contrasting example of the way in which museums can act as partners in community education was the 'Art in Action' project developed by the Fitzwilliam Museum, introduced through Philip Stephenson's workshop. John Finney showed how using even the simplest of resources, promoting innovative composition and performance in a musical ensemble can engender a sense of cohesion and community. EastFeast ([www.eastfeast.co.uk](http://www.eastfeast.co.uk)) and Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination ([www.cambridgecandi.org.uk](http://www.cambridgecandi.org.uk)) offered workshops exploring outside learning spaces and community involvement in the creative arts. Richard Dunne, head teacher, illustrated a model of learning through community action inspired by the Riverside Project in India which has become an embedded feature of the curriculum in his Surrey primary school.

**What's next?** We are planning a series of small-scale meetings at diverse locations in the region, providing platforms for sharing outcomes of initiatives, and for the exchange and development of ideas for transforming classroom practice. These local events will be complemented by occasional region-wide events. Finally, there is limited funding available to support small scale action research projects, carried out individually or collaboratively by schools. Any schools that would like to learn more about this opportunity and with a view to applying for funding should contact [pennycoltman@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:pennycoltman@primaryreview.org.uk).

## South West

Action research with schools is a key focus for the twin-site South West centre which is being co-ordinated by **Anthony Wilson** at the University of Exeter and **Penelope Harnett** at the University of West of England. Anthony tells us about the three projects which form part of the Exeter centre's work.

The first action research project is taking place in schools in Devon and is being led by Carol Evans. Its aim is to explore and evaluate current depictions of children's learning styles with a view to engaging children from very different contexts in deep, as opposed to passive, learning. The second project is taking place in schools in Dorset and is being led by Elizabeth Wood. It aims to explore ways of extending the principles of Early Years Foundation Stage teaching and learning throughout the whole primary phase. Finally, the termly seminar for head teachers is open to all our partnership schools and will act as a forum at which teachers and researchers from the CPR Regional Network will exchange, discuss and disseminate challenges and findings from the network and the projects as they progress. The start date of this is **September 2011**, and it will be led by Anthony Wilson.

**Invitation.** The CPR South West Regional Centre invites you to attend *Participating in change - The Launch of the Cambridge Primary Review South West Regional Centre*. Speakers: Robin Alexander, Director of the Cambridge Primary Review, and Alison Peacock, CPR Network national leader and Head Teacher of Wroxham Primary School, Potters Bar. The conference is on **Tuesday 17 May, 11.00-13.00**, at University of Exeter, St Luke's Campus.

Building on the ideas, evidence and proposals from the CPR, our vision for this regional network is that it will: (i) support reform in primary schools, local authorities and teacher education and training; (ii) support and influence local and national policy development; (iii) enhance the quality of primary education. For further details or to book a place please contact Anthony Wilson [anthonywilson@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:anthonywilson@primaryreview.org.uk).

The Bristol branch of the South West centre will hold its launch conference on **Wednesday 22 June**. For details, contact [penelopeharnett@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:penelopeharnett@primaryreview.org.uk).

## South Central

**Carol Robinson** from the School of Education at the University of Brighton leads the South Central regional centre which is developing partnerships with local schools, local authorities, HEIs and other

educational organisations interested in the CPR's ideas and proposals. The centre held its well-attended launch conference on **10 March**. Robin Alexander gave the keynote address and heads from local schools who have taken forward work in the spirit of the CPR gave presentations on their work. A series of **twilight seminars** are planned for the summer term to which teachers from local schools are warmly invited. Here are the provisional dates and titles. The seminars take place from 4 – 5.30 pm at the University of Brighton Falmer Campus. Entry is free but places are limited, so contact [carolrobinson@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:carolrobinson@primaryreview.org.uk).

**Wednesday 15 June** 'Children will not learn to think for themselves if their teachers are expected to do merely as they are told.' (CPR final report) *CPD: A case for teacher learning communities* with Soo Sturrock, University of Brighton.

**Tuesday 28 June:** *An alternative approach to school improvement*. Alison Peacock, Head Teacher of The Wroxham Primary School, Potters Bar and CPR Network National Leader.

**Thursday 7 July:** *Learning Journeys at Middle Street*. Julie Aldous, Head Teacher of Middle Street Primary School, Brighton.

### West Midlands

Based at the University of Wolverhampton, our West Midlands regional centre is led by **Diane Swift**, who tells us about the centre's lively start last term.

**7 March 2011** saw educationalists gather at the University of Wolverhampton for the launch of the West Midlands Regional Centre. Robin Alexander inspired the audience encouraging us to think about our role in realising the ambitions of the Cambridge Primary Review within our region. CPR Network National Leader Alison Peacock enthused and informed local authority and school colleagues alike as to how they could benefit from participating in the network. Gareth Pimley from Shropshire LA (a design and technology specialist) and Marilyn Mottram from Birmingham LA spoke about innovations in developing a high quality primary curriculum, underpinned by creative strategic leadership and subject expertise.

Following the launch, a West Midlands regional website has been set up:

<http://www.wlv.ac.uk/default.aspx?page=25994> and we have introduced our own education blog: <http://www.expressandstar.com/education/2011/04/06/blog-the-cambridge-primary-reviews-impact-on-education/>

Alongside the CPR nationally and the other regional centres we have made our submission to the DfE's consultation on the first phase of the National Curriculum Review. We have urged the government to recognise how essential it is that all primary schools provide a curriculum for young children which is not only broad but also informed by a high level of professional expertise in all areas. This was also a key message that the Year 2 BEd trainees at the University of Wolverhampton conveyed when they participated in a community of enquiry activity inspired the CPR's findings.

We now have two clusters of schools beginning to explore working together on the CPR's idea of a community curriculum. A group of nine schools (seven primary, one special and one high) in North Birmingham, and a group of four schools (one high and three primary) in East Staffordshire are piloting a dialogic approach to PSHE based on the concept of community. This work is particularly exciting since it is enabling teachers to devise a locally relevant curriculum, underpinned by subject expertise yet responsive to children's voices and needs.

On **26 May** local authority and school representatives who attended our launch are to meet again to consider in depth how we can share curriculum expertise across the region. We hope to facilitate a teachers' conference in **Spring 2012** to coincide with the second phase of the National Curriculum consultation. We hope that this conference will enable educationalists to share their ambitions for a meaningful and worthwhile primary curriculum and support them in interpreting national announcements with an informed and confident professionalism. Contact [dianeswift@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:dianeswift@primaryreview.org.uk).

**Stop press.** *Solihull Primary Curriculum Schools Network* aims to bring schools together to engage in collective thinking and development of the primary curriculum. It is open to all schools in Solihull and surrounding area and meets once a term. Contact Collette Higgins, Network Convenor, on 0121 704 6630.

## THE HELLO CAMPAIGN

**Jean Gross**, the Communication Champion, tells us about The National Year of Communication and The *Hello* campaign.

The Cambridge Primary Review highlighted **enacting dialogue** as a key aim for primary education and a critical component of successful teaching. The *Hello* campaign - the national year of communication – aims to support this message across the country.

The national year was a recommendation of the 2008 Bercow Review, which found that children’s speech, language and communication skills are not given the priority they require, and that provision for children with speech, language and communication difficulties is often poor. Backed and part-funded by government, *Hello* is run by a coalition of 35 voluntary organisations, including larger children’s charities like Action for Children and Barnado’s, and charities with a specific language focus like ICAN and Afasic. The aim of the campaign is to make sure that every child gets the support they need as they learn to communicate. Its audiences are parents, the children’s workforce, 14-19 year olds and commissioners of services.

Schools are invited to sign up at [www.hello.org.uk](http://www.hello.org.uk) to receive information on the events and initiatives that are planned, and to order free resources. For primary schools, these include the *What’s typical talk* poster that provides a progression in language development from 5 to 11, *Misunderstood* (a readable guide to speech, language and communication needs) and the *All Together Now* toolkit with practical suggestions for ways in which schools can get involved in the national year. Coming soon will be information on the *Communication Triathlon*, a series of sport-themed challenges for children to undertake, which is run by ICAN to help primary pupils develop their speaking and listening skills.

September 2011 is the campaign’s ‘Back to school’ month, with opportunities to find out about communication-friendly environment audits, podcasts, developing a Wave 1/2/3 provision model, staff development activities, and resources to support work in the classroom.

## HAVE YOU VISITED THE CAMBRIDGE PRIMARY REVIEW WEBSITE?

It’s well worth taking a look at the CPR national website which can be found at [www.primaryreview.org.uk](http://www.primaryreview.org.uk). In addition to detailed information about the Review itself and network activities, the site offers a fast-expanding collection of downloadable resources, including briefings on the Review’s 28 specially-commissioned surveys of published research relating to childhood, primary education and their social contexts which are generally acknowledged as being the most comprehensive of their kind. Alongside them is a wealth of other evidence and a bank of material, including powerpoints, to support the work of teachers and teacher educators. This is supplemented by material with a practical focus which they themselves have provided and will extend as the network progresses. For those investigating policy or media matters the considerable political and media interest which the Review prompted, internationally as well as in the UK, is recorded in an extensive archive going back to 2006.

## MORE EVENTS

*Network News* draws attention to major forthcoming events organised by the regional centres, but beyond these is a much longer list of events, activities and consultations in which the CPR is involved. We are in regular discussion with DfE and national organisations and are contributing to the various reviews which the government has initiated. CPR principals have spoken at numerous conferences organised by local authorities and other bodies, and international interest in the review and its ideas continues to grow. Most recently, for example, the CPR was the main focus for a major conference in Dublin addressed by the President of Ireland and attended by that country’s leading educationalists.

There isn't space for all these activities in *Network News*, but you will find many of them - past and future - listed on our website home page: [www.primaryreview.org.uk](http://www.primaryreview.org.uk) .

## NETWORK CONTACTS

### NATIONAL OFFICE

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### REGIONAL CENTRES *(Note that regional boundaries are flexible: contact whichever centre you wish)*

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**West Midlands** (Birmingham and West Midlands, Staffs, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire), Diane Swift, School of Education, University of Wolverhampton, Walsall Campus, Gorway Road, Walsall, WS1 3BD . 01902 323575 [dianeswift@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:dianeswift@primaryreview.org.uk)

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## CHILDREN, THEIR WORLD, THEIR EDUCATION: NETWORK MEMBERS' DISCOUNT OFFER

The final report – which is not really final at all since it sets the scene for a new era for primary education – is the CPR's key resource. Its 600 pages summarise the evidence and arguments, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the way things currently are, and offer an alternative vision for the future. Published by Routledge, *Children, their World, their Education* is available through bookshops, libraries and online retailers ([www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) offers the book at less than cover price). A substantial discount is available on bulk orders, for example from schools or in connection with conferences: contact Christina Lindeholm at Routledge [Christina.Lindeholm@informa.com](mailto:Christina.Lindeholm@informa.com). We are also pleased to announce that Routledge are offering a special discount for CPR Network members. To take advantage of this offer, please email Kelly Pickard, CPR Network Secretary [enquiries@primaryreview.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@primaryreview.org.uk) for an order form (electronic or hard copy), or phone 01707 659468.

**Reminder. As the CPR final report says (p xvi), 'the Cambridge Primary Review was set up to make a difference, not to make money'. Proceeds from the sale of the report are being distributed to organisations which in direct and practical ways advance the education of marginalised and vulnerable children.**

*Note: the views expressed in this and other Cambridge Primary Review publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation or the University of Cambridge.*