

Network News

From the Cambridge Primary Review

October 2011

NETWORK UPDATE

From Alison Peacock, Cambridge Primary Review Network Leader. Membership of the CPR network is growing rapidly. We now have regional centres or associate centres in twelve universities across the country and there is demand for more. Our membership is highly diverse and this enables communication among a uniquely wide range of people interested in primary education: teachers, heads, advisers, teacher educators, researchers and policy makers.

In the first instance our aim is to encourage colleagues to engage with the evidence and ideas presented in *Children, their World, their Education* (the CPR final report) and the CPR's other publications (see p 8 for full list). But that's just the starting point: we want to help schools to join our quest for new ideas and evidence, to become places where educational debate is the norm, to link with other schools, to re-empower themselves as professional communities, and hence to improve our children's education. In pursuit of this we have allocated grants from our sponsor, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, to support school-based action research projects in eight of the network's regions (see pp 3-5). These are 'pump-priming' grants, so we hope they will lay the foundations for longer term developments.

You can follow the network's progress by visiting our website www.primaryreview.org.uk. You can also follow us on [twitter@CPRnet](https://twitter.com/CPRnet) and/or join the Cambridge Review group on www.linkedin.com.

LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

From Robin Alexander, Director of the Cambridge Primary Review. The educational landscape is strikingly different from when we launched the CPR network, just one year ago. The coalition government has moved fast - some say too fast - to stamp its vision of reform on England's education system. Following up their promise to free schools from the weight of external prescription and micro-management that characterised the period 1997-2010 - of which we too were very critical - ministers have axed quangos and national strategies, reduced the power and presence of local authorities, and boosted schools' access to greater autonomy. There are now over 1000 academies and 24 free schools, and in September the first cohort of 100 Teaching Schools started work (see below). In all this, 'freedom' is the watchword.

Meanwhile, much else has been up for review. We have a new Ofsted inspection framework, the government's reviews of the EYFS and Key Stage 2 assessment have delivered their final reports and the review of teachers' professional standards is nearing completion. We are currently waiting for the national curriculum review to tell us whether our children will get Minimalism 1 (the core subjects specified in considerable detail but the rest of the curriculum left for schools to determine), Minimalism 2 (a broad entitlement curriculum secured by naming the required range of subjects, but with less prescription overall), or something else. The CPR has contributed to all these reviews, in several cases through extensive face-to-face discussion as well as written submissions. Readers will know the line we have taken; if not, see the CPR's final report and website.

Then there's the review that the CPR itself argued for. Earlier this year the government accepted the recommendation in the CPR's final report that the capacity of primary schools, as currently staffed, to plan and teach a broad curriculum to a consistently high standard in every subject needed to be properly investigated. Fuelled by worrying evidence from HMI and Ofsted, this issue has been around for decades but no previous government has been prepared to tackle it. Now, with the national strategies axed and local authority curriculum support drastically reduced at precisely the same time as schools are being offered greater curriculum freedom, the problem has acquired real urgency. In this case, DfE has opted for an in-house review rather than a public one, though the CPR has been closely involved throughout. The final report is expected shortly.

Apart from the fact that the reviews have probably happened in the wrong order so there's now a risk of misalignment (for example between the inspection framework, the professional standards and the national curriculum), some of what has been introduced since the May 2010 general election has been hotly contested. Tightening rather than loosening its control over schools and classrooms, the government has pressed ahead with its controversial phonics check for six-year olds. Popular with some, the academy and free school schemes are no less controversial with others. University-based teacher educators are worried about the renewed drive to shift initial teacher training into schools (nudged by the far right, this one comes round on a regular cycle every decade or so). Universities are in crisis because of the replacement of the teaching grant by student loans and by cuts that they fear will reduce their hard-won international competitiveness. Teachers and other public sector workers fear for their pensions.

There is also anxiety about assumptions underpinning the national curriculum review. For example, what counts as 'essential knowledge in the key subject disciplines'? In a system where official educational aims are invariably bland and cosmetic, what criteria will ministers and their advisers use to determine what is 'key' or 'essential'? In this vital matter whose voices will be heeded and whose ignored? What, now that the EBac includes no arts subjects and only one humanity subject, will happen to these areas of the primary and lower secondary curriculum? Granted that it is essential to learn from other countries, is it right to elevate the 'benchmarking' of England's national curriculum against PISA high flyers like Singapore and Hong Kong above the task of responding to national and local needs in the many aspects of children's education which the PISA tests don't cover?

Having said all this, what cannot be contested is that England's primary schools are entering an era in which they will have considerably greater freedom than two years ago. This applies to all schools, not just those like the academies and free schools that can opt out of the national curriculum. This is why, for all the concerns that may be voiced about specific policies, we believe that this is a moment of considerable opportunity, though we emphasise that it does require schools to think, read, discuss, debate and of course network, rather than wait to be told what to do. And this is why, although as an independent project the CPR continues to comment freely - and, when necessary, critically - on specific policies, we are working closely with genuinely empowering initiatives like the Teaching Schools scheme and are engaging constructively with ministers, DfE officials and the reviews they have initiated.

What is also beyond question is that the Cambridge Primary Review and its network are occupying an increasingly significant place in the new scheme of things. From time to time people say to us, 'But I thought that Labour killed off the CPR when it rejected the final report without bothering to read it.' That was then, this is now, and the real casualty was Labour's own Rose review. Anyway, and as we said at the time, the CPR final report is for the children, teachers and parents who are in primary education for the long haul, not just for those that Robin Day unkindly called 'here today, gone tomorrow' politicians.

No, we haven't been killed off. The CPR is alive and kicking, reinvigorated by political change and renewed support from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Its final report is a best seller, there has been significant movement on nearly all of the policy priorities we distilled from that report and presented just before the 2010 general election, the network is expanding and thriving, we are in regular discussion with the new government and a wide range of national organisations, and we receive many more requests to contribute to conferences and CPD events than we can accept. There's considerable international interest too: the CPR website has been accessed in 146 - three quarters - of the world's 196 countries. In many of those countries - notably United States, Australia, Sweden, Ireland, Spain, Japan, Germany, India, New Zealand and Indonesia - the use of CPR material is substantial, sustained and systematic.

Clearly, the Cambridge Primary Review reaches the parts that other reviews cannot reach.

NEWS FROM THE CPR REGIONAL CENTRES (contact details on p 7)

East Anglia (University of Cambridge). *From Penny Coltman, CPR Network East Co-ordinator.*

The Eastern Region has hit the ground running this term with six schools taking part in action research projects linked to our regional network and supported by a CPR pump-priming grant. The schools represent five of the region's counties, are based in inner city, semi-urban and rural locations and include a nursery, a junior school and four primary schools, one of which has recently become an academy. Their areas of investigation, linked to the aims and values of the Cambridge Primary Review, include creating innovative learning spaces, providing opportunities for trainee teachers to observe 'values in action', and promoting writing skills through stimulating first-hand local experiences. Outcomes of all these projects will be shared through the CPR's website and our regional webpage.

Our exciting calendar of regional events opens with a mathematics morning on Monday November 28 at Cambridge University's Faculty of Education in association with NRICH, the mathematical enrichment organisation. Their website <http://nrich.maths.org> is an Aladdin's cave of mathematical inspiration. The morning, which will include workshops, will explore ways of developing excellence through mathematics in problem-solving contexts. Next, in response to schools' interest in engaging in the arts, our spring term event will focus on music, especially singing. We are also developing links with schools and organisations that are offering to host smaller, local events and the first of these will take place in Suffolk soon after Christmas. For details, contact Penny Coltman and see our webpage www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/primaryreview/easternregion/

London (Institute of Education, University of London). *From Sara Bubb, CPR London Co-ordinator.*

The London CPR Centre has been overwhelmed with requests for seminars and CPD related to the recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review. We have a new network co-ordinator, Sara Bubb, who is leading our steering group. We have received a CPR pump-priming grant to make a film about the aims of the CPR in action within London schools and we are very interested in hearing from you if your school would like to be filmed. Contact Sara Bubb in the first instance.

East Midlands (Bishop Grosseteste University College). *From Pat Beckley, CPR East Midlands Co-ordinator.*

The launch of the Cambridge Primary Review network began in July when over ninety teachers and lecturers met at Bishop Grosseteste University College in Lincoln to discuss issues and concerns and to set up local groups. The first local meetings will be held in October and November to determine priorities for action and development. Further outreach events are being planned across the region. The East Midlands is a large region and we hope to build links with the University of Nottingham to broaden access to CPR activities. http://www.bishopg.ac.uk/?_id=10601

South Central (University of Brighton). *From Carol Robinson, CPR Network South Central Co-ordinator.*

Our centre hosted three twilight seminars last term. The first seminar, 'CPD: a case for teacher learning communities' was led by Soo Sturrock. The second, 'An alternative approach to school improvement' was led by Alison Peacock, headteacher and CPR National Network Leader. The third seminar, 'Learning Journeys at Middle Street', was led by Julie Aldous, head teacher of Middle Street Primary School in Brighton. All were attended by local teachers who have an interest in taking forward work in their schools in the spirit of the CPR. This term we have an afternoon session led by Alison Peacock in late November. This will explore the relevance of CPR and other research to classroom and leadership practice. If you are interested in attending, contact Carol Robinson.

The centre has received a CPR pump-priming grant to undertake a project on working from the CPR's aims for primary education to enhance cross-phase planning, primary-secondary transfer and curriculum, teaching and assessment in years 7 and 8 in a secondary school. www.brighton.ac.uk/education/research/cpr/index.php?PageId=670

West Midlands (University of Wolverhampton). From Diane Swift, CPR West Midlands Co-ordinator.

The West Midlands Centre is pursuing several strands of work steered by a group of school leaders, teachers, teachers and curriculum advisers from across the region, all of whom are committed to helping schools to provide children with a broad, balanced and rich curriculum. The work is supported by a CPR pump-priming grant. We would very much welcome your thoughts, contributions and involvement. Contact Diane Swift or visit our web page www.wlv.ac.uk/default.aspx?page=25994 to find out more.

Personal and Social Philosophy. At present, three clusters of schools in Staffordshire (three primary and one high school), Birmingham (four primary schools) and Solihull (two primary schools) are exploring an innovative approach to PSHE which uses philosophy to explore the idea of community by drawing on and extending children's everyday experiences. Bravely and in the spirit of the CPR we are sharing our developing pedagogic dialogues via a blog. Please do visit and add your comments at <http://personalsocialphilosophy.wordpress.com/>

Empowering Curriculum Development. Our steering group is working on an evaluation tool that encapsulates the aims of the CPR for teachers and curriculum leaders. We hope to trial this with clusters of schools during the spring term and expect these schools to offer an 'open school' event in the summer term that will enable teachers from across the region to explore what we have developed and bring their own ideas. More details later.

TIDE (Teachers in Development Education) conference. On 16 November, at Millennium Point in Birmingham, we join forces with TIDE for a conference on 'A world fit to grow up in' at which Robin Alexander will be the keynote speaker. At this event we shall offer a workshop on our Empowering Curriculum Development project, and Year 2 trainee teachers from the University of Wolverhampton will be giving their perspectives on developing curriculum expertise. Contact TIDE (www.tidec.org) to book your place.

Food and Farming is a theme about which many teachers enjoy developing curriculum materials. On 2 and 8 November we shall join with FACE (Farming and Countryside Education) to offer free days of accredited CPD activities on Cannock Chase that will enable teachers to explore ways of teaching and learning outside the classroom. Contact Diane Swift.

North West (Edge Hill University). From Nadine Baker, CPR North West Co-ordinator.

In the north west we are currently engaged in three projects focussing on policy priorities identified in the CPR's final report:

Assessment reform. Twenty classes have been engaged in a project using Promethean hand-held learner response systems (ActivExpression) with the aim of discovering how the technology supports formative teaching and assessment.

Children's agency, voice and rights. We are planning a project which will explore why so many children don't engage in their learning and what teachers and trainee teachers can do to address this challenge.

Children with special needs. We shall shortly disseminate findings from a joint schools/HEI project exploring the impact of teachers in training undertaking placements in special schools.

Further information about all of these projects can be found on the Edgehill website www.edgehill.ac.uk .

South East (Canterbury Christchurch University). From Vanessa Young, CPR Network South East Co-ordinator.

We are organising a primary conference at Salamons, the university's campus near Tonbridge, on Monday 7th November. It is open to all schools in the region (contact our administrator Caroline Holden caroline.holden@canterbury.ac.uk for details) and Alison Peacock will be the main speaker, focusing on the relevance of the CPR aims for all aspects of primary education. This will be followed by seminars and workshops relating to the primary curriculum, children and childhood.

With the combined support of a CPR pump-priming grant and Canterbury Christ Church University, we are negotiating with three emerging primary school networks in the region to work with us on collaborative action research projects. The idea is to involve not only the schools' teachers and pupils, but also trainee teachers on placement in the schools. Schools within the networks will each identify a research focus which will link their priorities with those of the CPR.

We are also keen to develop cross-phase awareness of the CPR principles as these have implications for all practice in school - especially as many secondary schools are using 'primary' approaches to tackle the Year 7 dip in attainment. The University's cross-phase 7-14 initial training programme, one of the few in the country, should provide a valuable conduit for this. Contact Vanessa Young.

South West (University of Exeter). From Anthony Wilson, CPR Network South West Co-ordinator.

Our regional network is gaining momentum. We aim to establish our first CPR research 'hub' in November. With support from a CPR pump-priming grant and Exeter University we have begun an exciting EYFS project in Dorset schools led by Elizabeth Wood and we aim to disseminate findings next year. We also have an action research project in Devon led by Carol Evans. Our project schools have participated in a training day refining their chosen areas of enquiry and looking at research methods and methodology. Teachers have visited each others' schools to observe teaching and discuss issues of common interest. The overall theme of this project is about deep engagement of learners. Contact Anthony Wilson.

North East & Cumbria (Universities of Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne). From Kate Wall, CPR North East Co-ordinator.

The network is steadily increasing in size and scope with a good range of participants from across the region, including representatives from schools, charities, local authorities and third sector organisations. Booking for all events can be done via Vivienne Sturgiss: Vivienne.Sturgiss@ncl.ac.uk

Scoping events. Scoping events are targeting regional thinking about each of the 12 aims for primary education proposed in the CPR final report (pages 197-199). These are scheduled for once a month and alternate between Newcastle and Durham Universities. They attract a wide range of participants. Five events have already taken place and these are being written up as discussion documents for the regional website www.dur.ac.uk/education/research/cambridge_primary_review. Foci for the current term include *Fostering Skill* (12 October, Durham), *Empowerment* (7 November, Newcastle) and *Local, National and Global Citizenship* (5 December, Durham). Network members are asked to bring along a piece of evidence which they believe encapsulates that aim in practice in their school (this could be video, an example of children's work, planning documents, or other artefacts). These will provide the basis for identifying both shared and contrasting ways to put the CPR's aims into practice.

Learning walks. A full and exciting schedule of learning walks is in place and schools and other organisations continue to volunteer as hosts. Learning walks complement the scoping events and benefit the host institution as well as the visitors. The hosts pose one or two key questions for their visitors which they believe will provide useful feedback and the visitors get the opportunity to learn professionally from each other as well as the host organisation. Murton Primary School hosted the first CPR regional network learning walk on 14 June. A full summary of the event, the innovative practice at Murton and examples of resources are now available: www.dur.ac.uk/education/research/cambridge_primary_review/. Contact Vivienne Sturgiss to book a place.

TEACHING SCHOOLS

In September thirty six primary schools were designated as Teaching Schools. Many more will soon be participating in Teaching School Alliances across the country. During the summer the CPR team met colleagues from the National College and the DfE to explore ways in which the CPR network could support the development of system leadership and school self-improvement through partnership. The

CPR will place particular emphasis on supporting the research and development strand of Teaching School alliances. www.nationalcollege.org.uk

TEACH FIRST PRIMARY

The first Teach First Primary participants attended the summer institute at the University of Warwick this year. The CPR team have supported the development of the primary training materials and are also members of the Teach First Advisory Group. We wish all new participants good luck as they start work in primary schools across the country. Teach First seeks to address the same challenges of inequity and disadvantage which headed the CPR's 2010 list of policy priorities which are at the heart of the work of our network. www.teachfirst.org.uk

THE NATIONAL SCITT

The National SCITT trains primary teachers in schools all over the country. The London & South East group of schools is currently embarking on a piece of small-scale action research into alternative approaches to assessment without National Curriculum levels. Philip Hood Philip.hood@nottingham.ac.uk is the lead contact for the SCITT. If you are interested in linking with a National SCITT school in your area to conduct some action research please contact Philip to discuss further.

SIGN OF THE TIMES: FROM LOCAL AUTHORITY ADVISER TO CONSULTANT

Gareth Pimley, primary education consultant and member of the CPR West Midlands Steering Group writes: After nearly 18 years working for Shropshire Advisory Service I opted to become a self-employed education consultant at the beginning of May 2011. Alison Peacock asked me to share my experience of making this transition, aware that a number of LA-based colleagues reading this newsletter may be contemplating a similar move.

I have been very fortunate to enjoy a fulfilling career with Shropshire Advisory Service, so in December 2010, when I made the decision to move on, it felt like a pretty risky thing to do. As it turns out, it was the right decision. I now work on a consultancy basis with schools, the Design and Technology Association, and other organisations and companies involved in primary education, including the CPR and its West Midlands regional centre. Although I have a new role, what I do remains very much the same: helping schools to raise standards through developing teachers' professional expertise, drawing on the CPR's evidence, my own principles and what we know about effective curriculum design. The major difference is that I have had to learn in a short space of time how to run a business. However, now that systems are place this is proving to be a fairly straightforward process.

After four months, I am still on a fairly steep learning curve. What I can say for sure is that there were a number of key factors that enabled me to make an effective transition from working with the LA. One of the most important of these was keeping up to speed with the latest developments in primary education. In this respect the CPR network, website and final report have provided invaluable sources of information, ideas and evidence and have served as a reference point for much of my freelance work. Likewise, my consultancy for the Design and Technology Association has kept me in close touch with the government's EYFS and national curriculum reviews.

If any LA-based members of the network are thinking about becoming self-employed, I would be very happy to share my initial experiences in more detail. Alternatively, if you are working in a primary school and are looking for some support in design and technology or whole curriculum development, please contact me on 01939 291103 or 07790015871 or email garethpimley@btinternet.com.

NETWORK CONTACTS

NATIONAL OFFICE

CPR Director: Professor Robin Alexander, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, 184 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 8PQ. 01223 767511. robinalexander@primaryreview.org.uk

CPR Network Leader: Alison Peacock, The Wroxham Primary School, Wroxham Gardens, Potters Bar, Herts, EN6 3DJ. 01707 659468. alisonpeacock@primaryreview.org.uk

CPR Research Fellow: Julia Flutter, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, 184 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 8PQ. 01223 767525. juliaflutter@primaryreview.org.uk

CPR Network Secretary: Kelly Pickard, The Wroxham Primary School, Wroxham Gardens, Potters Bar, Herts, EN6 3DJ. 01707 659468. enquiries@primaryreview.org.uk

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

London: Sara Bubb, Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL. 0773 454 0804 sarabubb@primaryreview.org.uk

North East, Newcastle (in partnership with Durham) (Tyneside, Northumberland, Cumbria): Elaine Hall, School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, King George VI Building, Queen Victoria Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU. 0191 222 8453 elainehall@primaryreview.org.uk

North East, Durham (in partnership with Newcastle) (Durham, Wearside, Teesside, North Yorkshire), Dr Kate Wall, School of Education, Room 1.10, Burdon House, Leazes Road, Durham, DH1 1TA, 0191 334 8334 katewall@primaryreview.org.uk

North West (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire, Cheshire, West Yorkshire): Nadine Baker, Faculty of Education, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, Lancs, L39 4QP. 01695 584336. nadinebaker@primaryreview.org.uk

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

East Midlands (Lincolnshire, East Midlands, Humberside, East Yorkshire, South Yorkshire): Pat Beckley, School of Teacher Development, Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln, LN1 3DY. 01522 583746 pde@bishopg.ac.uk

East Anglia (Norfolk, Suffolk, North Essex, Cambs, Herts, Beds, Northants): Penny Coltman, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, 184 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 8PQ. 01223 767547. pennycoltman@primaryreview.org.uk

South West, Exeter (in partnership with Bristol) (Cornwall, Devon, Dorset): Dr Anthony Wilson, Graduate School of Education, St Luke's Campus. Heavitree Road, Exeter, EX1 2LU. 01392 724924 anthonywilson@primaryreview.org.uk

South West, Bristol (in partnership with Exeter) (Bristol, Somerset, Hereford, Gloucs): Dr Penelope Harnett, Department of Education, Faculty of Creative Arts, Humanities and Education, Frenchay Campus, Bristol, BS16 1QY. 0117 328 4232 penelopeharnett@primaryreview.org.uk

South Central, Brighton (in partnership with Oxford) (West Sussex, Hants): Dr Carol Robinson, School of Education, Checkland Building, University of Brighton, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9PH. 01273 644568. carolrobinson@primaryreview.org.uk

South Central, Oxford (in partnership with Brighton) (Oxford, Berks, Bucks, Wilts): Helen Wilson, Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University, OX2 9AT. 01865 488451 helenwilson@primaryreview.org.uk

South East (Kent, East Sussex, Surrey, South Essex). Vanessa Young, Department of Primary Education, Canterbury Christ Church University, North Holmes Road, Canterbury, CT1 1QU. 01227 782427 vanessayoung@primaryreview.org.uk

WWW.PRIMARYREVIEW.ORG.UK

From Julia Flutter, CPR Research Associate. Check out the CPR website www.primaryreview.org.uk each week to keep up to date on news, resources, downloads and information on what's important for primary education. Recent additions include summaries of government reports, copies of the CPR's evidence to the various government reviews, opinion pieces about important national or international developments, relevant media coverage and a live diary section listing recent and upcoming events which the CPR has organised or in which it is involved. A wealth of resource material is available for downloading: the CPR introductory booklet, 41 briefing papers summarising vital evidence about children and their primary education in user-friendly form, PowerPoint presentations, newspaper articles, the texts of public lectures ... and much more.

During the next few months we shall add case studies of innovative practice from schools and the CPR's regional centres. But let's hear from you too: if you have innovative work to share please contact our network administrator, Kelly Pickard enquiries@primaryreview.org.uk.

CHECKLIST: CAMBRIDGE PRIMARY REVIEW PUBLICATIONS

To date, the Cambridge Primary Review has produced the following:

Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review (602 pp, Routledge, 2010) <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415548717/>

The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys (850 pp, Routledge, 2010, soon to be available as an e-book) <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415548694/>

Plus the following short publications, most of which can be downloaded at www.primaryreview.org.uk/publications/overview.php

1 illustrated booklet, *Introducing the Cambridge Primary Review*

31 interim reports, 28 of which have been re-issued in revised and re-edited form in *The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys*

28 research briefings (CPR briefings are 4-page leaflets summarising key issues and evidence in user-friendly form)

13 thematic/synoptic briefings

15 media releases

11 newspaper articles

3 issues of *Network News*

For discounted copies of the final report (e.g. for network members or conference sales) contact Christina Lindeholm at Routledge Christina.Lindeholm@informa.com

Proceeds from the sale of the final 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.