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INTERIM REPORTS

Research Survey 8/1

CHILDREN'S LIVES OUTSIDE SCHOOL AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

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Berry Mayall

October 2007

This is one of a series of 32 interim reports from the Primary Review, an independent enquiry into the condition and future of primary education in England. The Review was launched in October 2006 and will publish its final report in late 2008.

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A briefing which summarises key issues from this report has also been published. The report and briefing are available electronically at the Primary Review website: www.primaryreview.org.uk. The website also contains Information about other reports in this series and about the Primary Review as a whole. (Note that minor amendments may be made to the electronic version of reports after the hard copies have been printed).

We want this report to contribute to the debate about English primary education, so we would welcome readers' comments on anything it contains. Please write to: evidence@primaryreview.org.uk.

The report forms part of the Review's research survey strand, which consists of thirty specially-commissioned surveys of published research and other evidence relating to the Review's ten themes. The themes and reports are listed in Appendices 1 and 3.

This survey relates to Primary Review theme 8, **Beyond the School**.

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CHILDREN'S LIVES OUTSIDE SCHOOL AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

INTRODUCTION

The Primary Review is being carried out in the context of a number of theoretical and policy-relevant developments in the study of children and childhood. Whilst Plowden (1967) could confidently, it seems, rely on Piagetian concepts – a universalist vision of the child as individual explorer programmed to develop through identifiable stages – more recently other ideas within developmental psychology and sociology and the rights movement have come to prominence. All three conceptualise children as active participants in social relations and learning.

Thus, socio-cultural theory focuses on the specificity of the concepts, language and patterns of action that children acquire in their earliest social environments – at home (for example Bruner 1986); it is fashionable nowadays to study children ‘in their cultures’, rather than ‘the child’ in isolation (Greene 1999). We learn that children come to school with varying languages and varying linguistic styles, which may clash with those of the school (Bernstein 1971). We learn about the plurality of children’s daily experiences and about cultural variation in the goals of socialisation across the world (Cole 1996; LeVine 2003). In relation to this, Penn (2002) has described and deplored the globalising of Western child-rearing ideas. In England, work on the varying cultural arenas within which children grow up has built on Bourdieu’s work and has argued for the necessity for schools to recognise and respond to variation in children’s lived experience.

Psychological paradigms on children’s own knowledge and perspectives - which remain the dominant approach to children in England - are complemented by the *sociology of childhood*, developed over the last 25 years, where children are understood as social agents who contribute to social relational processes and to the construction of their own childhoods (Prout and James 1990; Hutchby and Moran-Ellis 1998b; Mayall 2002). Children are conceptualised as a social group, which contributes to the division of labour in a society, largely through the work they do in pre-schools and schools (Qvortrup 1985). Commentators within this paradigm draw attention to the power that adults hold over children and over childhood itself; to adult responsibilities to enable good childhoods; and to the difficulties adults and children face when adults try to reconcile adult power with respect for children (for example Shamgar-Handelman 1994). These ideas challenge the idea of the teacher as benevolent but intrinsically superior, responding to the ‘needs’ and stages of development in their ‘pupils’; instead, the educational endeavour is to be seen as a joint enterprise between citizens.

These ideas are further complemented by the growing strength of the children’s rights movement. Whilst movements to respect children’s rights go back over a hundred years, the 1989 UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) has most forcefully promoted these rights, through measures aimed at states’ compliance (Franklin 2002). In response, a number of pressure groups have been formed (for example Children’s Rights Alliance). The articles of the Convention stress children’s protection, provision and participation rights (the 3 Ps). In England, protection has traditionally been the priority in policy and practice (Hendrick

2003: Chapter 6). Child protection was an urgent priority in late nineteenth century England, in the work of voluntary bodies (such as Barnardos). After 1945, the welfare state took over many of their protective functions and provision for children has also been central to policies. Adult responsibilities to protect and provide for children sit easily within the social history of the country. But respecting children's participation rights (as outlined in Article 12 of the UNCRC) demands re-conceptualising children as citizens, rather than as objects of adult socialisation agendas. It is notable – and consistent with English social history – that whilst health and welfare services have gone some way to recognising all 3 Ps, in education there has been considerable resistance, bolstered by traditional ideas about teacher-‘pupil’ relations and coupled with curricula handed down from government. Children's citizenship rights in the here and now are not a prime focus of the UNCRC – an omission that encourages neglect of these rights (Freeman 2000), not least in education.

In connection with the above points, I note that over recent years ideas about home-school relations have changed, at least in the research literature. Thus at the outset of the state education system and for many years thereafter, educationalists worked on the assumption that school agendas were ‘given’; the question then was how far children achieved within these agendas and how far their parents co-operated. We have a massive literature on how ethnicity, gender and social class help or impede children's academic progress; and on home-school relations (see Primary Review research surveys 5/1 and 7/1). There has been less research on the extent to which school staff recognise, respect and respond to what children bring from home and how such response may affect children's achievement within school agendas. Furthermore, school agendas themselves are up for re-consideration. For instance, some parents may challenge school education agendas and practices. Children's learning from new technologies may be in advance of teacher knowledge. And employers' demands of children when they grow up – for instance, flexible, computer-literate workers – may require school to reflect these demands. So whilst how children's learning before school may influence their learning there is an interesting question, perhaps an equally interesting question relates to responsive behaviour by the school. How far do and should schools respond to and build on what children bring to school?

This point leads on to an undesirable feature of English life nowadays: the problematisation of children - as victims or threats - and of childhood itself. The tendency to consider children as inherently problematic goes back a long way (see Jenks 1996: Chapter 1), but reached new heights during the years of Conservative government (1979-97) when politicians responded to the huge increases in child poverty rates (to about 30 per cent) by demonising children and mothers (Pilcher and Wagg 1996). The present government has lifted some thousands of children out of poverty, although, in terms of justice between generations, it has been more successful in reducing pensioner poverty (*The Guardian* 28.3.07: page 38). Currently we are told that childhood is worse in the UK than in other ‘advanced’ countries, and that our young people aged 11, 13 and 15 agree (Children's Society 2006; UNICEF 2007), though a recent Ofsted report claims most say they are happy (Mansell 2007). Whatever may be the quality of the data and analysis (a critical analysis is urgently needed), the media have responded enthusiastically. To look no further than the most recent months (February, March 2007) and no further than *The Guardian* newspaper, we find front-page headlines on the poor, risky and insecure lives of our children, and on bullying (14.2.07; 27.3.07). Politicians have again raised the game; a Commons select committee calls for a national enquiry into bullying; and the Conservative party is launching an enquiry into ‘lost childhood in Britain’ (26.3.07: page 5); new proposals (following ASBOs) are to assess every 11-year-old as to the risk of their turning to crime (28.3.07: page 6). Commentators give two basic causes for the ‘facts’ of this crisis in child welfare: stress arising from pressure on

school-children and inequalities arising from child poverty (Toynbee 2007). These issues are running themes in this report.

A caveat. The remit for this report is to describe and discuss children's out-of-school lives and learning and how these relate to their experiences and the work they do in primary school. This is a huge topic and in most areas of their lives, there is unlikely to be any clear evidence on such links. Research has tended to be on what happens at school, or on what happens outside school, with little attention to linkages. And linkages are hard to prove. Further, to prove (almost) conclusively that there is no evidence of such links would require systematic reviews for each area of children's lives, of the kind carried out at the EPPI-Centre at the Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education. For this report, given the limited time available and the wide range of topics that seem relevant, I have restricted the enquiry, in the main, to reviews of the literature, hand-searching journals and consulting experts. Whilst, therefore, there may be bias arising from these limitations, these three types of searches provide some triangulation.

This paper has three main sections. I describe some aspects of children's out-of school lives and learning firstly before they start school (under-fives); and secondly during the primary school years. Thirdly I consider evidence for impacts of these lives and learnings on activity at school, and for school responsiveness to these.

1 CHILDREN'S LIVES AND LEARNING IN THE PRE-SCHOOL YEARS

Children as social agents at home

Evidence from both psychological and sociological studies indicates that pre-school children are active agents in learning, through interaction with others at home and in the neighbourhood. The data reviewed here is mainly from small-scale studies which have mapped what happens within families, with emphasis on children's engagement and learning (Boulton 1983: Chapter 4; Mayall and Foster 1989; Mayall 1991; Ribbens 1994; Hutchby and Moran Ellis 1998a; Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards 2002).

Moral and cultural learning

The sociable character of young children's behaviour is obvious to parents, but has also been studied by social scientists. In their early months, children respond to and initiate interaction with parents and siblings, imitate others' actions and interact playfully, angrily or aggressively (Alderson 2000a: Chapter 2). Judy Dunn and colleagues (1988) studied children's learning at home (under-threes). She notes (1988: 5) that children quickly learn at home that when you take part in family dramas as actor, victim or observer, you also have to put the case from a particular perspective. Through interactions within the family, children learn about justice, fair shares, and other people's viewpoints. More generally, psychologists argue that children are 'prepared' to make moral judgments, in the same way as they are prepared, or programmed, to speak; and that feelings are the basis for moral development (Kagan 1986: xiii). 'Morality is a fundamental, natural and important part of children's lives from the time of their first relationships' (Damon 1990:1). Brooker's study (2002) of children's learning at home and how far this is acknowledged and responded in school, is one of the few studies to span home and school experience and learning (see also Jackson 1979; Mayall 1994). Following Rogoff (1990), she notes that children learn by apprenticeship – they copy and later take on activities more autonomously. What they are learning is 'local knowledge' – what is relevant to their family and its cultural and moral norms and practices; this knowledge may or may not be resonant with 'official knowledge' – as Bernstein put it. It may or may not be recognised by school. Part of learning the moral codes of the family is learning

about responsibility. Parents will vary in what they expect of their children here, from being responsible for self-care, or for 'good behaviour' to doing jobs around the home or helping with siblings (Brooker 2002: 49- 51).

A critical aspect of what children learn at home is that they are persons. Indeed, parents find through interactions with children that they are not pre-social projects but people now – with their own specific characteristics and preferences. Whilst parents may be expected to 'socialise' their children, these child-adult interactions extend far beyond socialisation paradigms (Thorne 1993). Much of what parents do for and with their children is not future-oriented, but concerned with the present. For some parents children are companions: interesting, supportive, amusing, decision-makers. It can be confidently asserted (at least for England) that children stand more of a chance of respect as a person at home than anywhere else (Neale 2002; Neale, Wade and Smart 1998).

Children both inhabit and learn about the cultural and social worlds of their family. Studies have shown that at home 4-year olds engage in discussions with adults far more than they do at pre-school (Tizard and Hughes 1984; Carr 2000); these discussions start from topical events – shopping, meeting other people, cooking – and range over the meanings of these events. Children also learn from hearing conversations between adults; these adult narratives, explanatory models and moral interpretations about what is happening locally serve also to tell children about their cultural and moral worlds (Bruner 1990: Chapter 3). Children also engage with media at home – a topic discussed later.

Participation in everyday household and neighbourhood activity

Studies of young children's lives (as listed above) indicate that children enthusiastically participate in the activities of the home. This may include helping to clean the home, cooking and other food preparation, going shopping, visiting neighbours. The 'people work' that feminists have identified – caring for family members in both practical and emotional ways – is carried out by children too, who may fetch and carry, tidy up, care for and play with siblings, or comfort a sibling or parent. Thus children participate in the division of labour at home – as they do in pre-schools and schools.

Language

Children from all backgrounds learn speech that is adequate for communicating in the social environment in which they live. Bruner (1990: Chapter 3) refers to recordings of an 18-month to 2-year-old girl soliloquising about daily events – he calls it a drive to understand why things happen; and this drive pushes forward competence in grammatical construction and use of wider vocabulary. Tizard and Hughes (1984) suggest many reasons why children's conversations at home are so long, detailed and complex. An extensive array of activities takes place in and around the home and provides food for thought and conversation. Mothers know their children intimately from birth – their interests, knowledge and concerns, so mothers can understand and tap into their children's opening gambits. Mothers have only a small number of children to interact with (compared to teachers). Children generally have a very close relationship with their mother, stay close to her and will share with her their concerns and questions. Margaret Carr (2000) supports these points and, following Rogoff, emphasises that teachers must seek children's own perspectives as a means of bridging the adult-child gap and of co-constructing learning with the children.

Health-related ideas and practices

An important kind of learning at home in the pre-school years is about what are appropriate health practices. Children learn about keeping themselves clean, brushing their teeth, maintaining their health through activity, rest, eating and drinking; restoring their health

through resting, being comforted (Mayall 1994). They learn to follow family beliefs and customs in these matters and to take on some responsibility for their own health maintenance (Newson and Newson 1970: Chapter 4). Studies of health promotion within the family have noted that parents vary in how far they allow their children to engage with health-related decisions; some are authoritarian, others negotiate or strike trade-off bargains, and some allow children to decide (Holland, Mauthner and Sharpe 1996; see also Prout 1996).

In summary, evidence from psychologists and sociologists is that children by the age of five have acquired social and moral competence within their family setting. They have acquired a sense of who they are, in relational terms, an identity as a family member. They have learned enough language to function within their family. They are experienced in learning within relations with other children and with adults. They are active participants in family activities. They have acquired health-related knowledge about how to maintain their health.

Children who do not have enabling homes

There are perhaps three main groups of children whose life in their early years and at school may be adversely affected by their living conditions: children in bad housing, children not living with parents and children whose parents cannot or will not look after them.

Children in bad housing

A Shelter report (Rice 2006) states that 1.4 million children in England live in bad housing (p.9) - defined to include homelessness, overcrowding and unfitness. Ethnic minority families and families in poverty are especially likely to live in poor housing (Quilgars 2006). Bad housing is associated with poor experience and attainment in school, but it is not clear whether the housing problem causes difficulties for children, or whether housing problems exacerbate existing problems within the family. Thus children living in bad housing are nearly twice as likely as others not to attend school (some of this is to do with frequent house moves, and poor access to a school place) (Rice 2006: 12). They are nearly twice as likely as other children to leave school without any GCSEs (Rice 2006: 11). Poor housing conditions are associated with poor health in children, which in turn may affect school attendance (p.21). Quilgars' (2006) review of the literature on health in relation to poor housing indicates poor health, especially respiratory problems, among the children, but she notes that identifying housing as the cause has not been proved.

'Looked after' children

In England (2003), 60,790 children were in the care of the local authority, with most (41,000) fostered, fewer (8,320) in residential accommodation, and 6,400 living with their parents. These children constitute 4.9 per thousand children (under 18s) (Gibbs et al 2005: 204-6). DfES (2005) figures for 2005 give 23,600 0-9 year olds in care, again mostly in foster care. Whilst some ethnic minority groups (Asian families) probably use the care system less than others, 'dual heritage' and disabled children are probably over-represented (Gibbs et al 2005: 218-9). 'Looked after' children have low educational attainment: for while 95 per cent of 16-year-olds gain one or more GCSEs/GNVQs, only 44 per cent of looked-after children do so; and they are less likely to gain A-C grades (8 per cent compared to half of all young people) (Gibbs et al 2005: 215-6).

Why 'looked after' children do relatively badly at school may relate to 'in care' factors, and/or to family factors. One study of 249 children in the care of six local authorities for over 12 months found that only 44 per cent remained in the same placement for the first 12 months; however, getting reliable and consistent data is difficult (Ward and Skuse 2001). Further, the work parents (especially mothers) do to support and encourage their children

throughout their school years is not easily replicated by carers and social workers who do not care for the child throughout those years (see Ward 1995: Chapter 3 for evidence that social workers have low educational expectations for 'looked after' children). Another analysis notes that 'looked after' children originate from the most disadvantaged social groups, characterised by 'family breakdown', poverty, poor parental support, maltreatment and high special educational need – and that these factors are strongly linked to low educational attainment – however this does not absolve local authorities from redressing social disadvantage (Berridge 2006). A Social Exclusion Unit report (2003) somewhat links 'in care' and home factors; it identifies five key reasons for under-achievement in education: instability of placement; time out of school; children lacking help at school with education; children lacking support and encouragement from some carers; children needing more help with emotional, mental or physical health and well-being (see also Jackson et al 2003).

Children whose parents cannot or do not care for them

A small proportion of children have parents who, because of ill-health or disability, because of drugs or alcohol problems, or long stressful hours of work, cannot care for their children in ways which encourage and support them at home and school. Clearly, it is difficult to put figures on these categories, because they will vary in severity and impact. For instance, it is alleged that about 50,000 children (under 18) are caring for an ill or disabled parent, providing substantial, regular care (Aldridge and Becker 2002). Another estimate puts it at 175,000 (Smithers 2005). Detailed research has suggested the desirability of considering the contributions, wishes and needs of all the people in a family, rather than simply deploring the inappropriateness of burdening children with caring responsibilities (Banks et al 2001).

Pre-school care and education

This is another large topic. Since 1997, care-and-education provision for pre-school children has been a government priority. The ten-year strategy for childcare (DfES 2005) sets out plans and aims thus: by March 2006 to reach 65 per cent of under-4s and their families in the 20 per cent most disadvantaged English areas; by 2010 all communities to have children's centres, offering integrated care, health and education, including family support and education. According to the Daycare Trust (2005), in 2005 there was a full-time registered childcare place for half of under-8s in England (compared to one place for every nine under-8s in 1997). This includes minders and nurseries; most of the expansion has been in the private sector. In practice, the most common kind of care parents used was informal – relatives and partners. The Families and Children Study (FACS) shows that where mothers in two-parent families 'worked', partners and parents-in law were the commonest sources of care (27 per cent and 26 per cent respectively); and where the mother in lone-mother families 'worked', parents-in law and other relatives or friends were the commonest (27 per cent and 17 per cent) (Willitts et al 2005). The Daycare Trust (2005) notes that many families cannot access 'high quality care' because services are inappropriate, too expensive or not available. Particular groups who are 'missing out' are: disabled children, ethnic minority children, workless households, student parents, large families, and those working unsociable hours. However, we cannot discount the possibility that partners, relatives and friends – since they may have a personal long-term commitment to the child – may be providing educative care comparable to mothers' care, as identified by Tizard and Hughes (1984). Interestingly, it has been found that where under-3s had been cared for by a relative (usually a grandmother), rather than by a non-relative, there was a slight effect – the children were more co-operative and less anti-social (Sylva et al 2004: 14).

As regards part-time provision, a DfES report (2006) says that all 3- and 4-year-olds are now entitled to free early education (12.5 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year), defined to include provision in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors, including

registered childminder networks. The report claims that 96 per cent of 3-year-olds and 'virtually all' 4-year-olds are taking up some free early years education (so defined); of 3-year-olds, 38 per cent were in maintained nursery schools and primary schools, with 55 per cent in private and voluntary provision and 3 per cent in independent schools; of 4 year-olds, most (79 per cent) were in maintained nursery and primary schools (DfES 2006). These percentages will include some children who also spend part of the day with other carers, given that many mothers 'work'.

The government has set out a list of topics which should underpin 3-5 year-olds' experiences at educational establishments that receive grant funding (the Foundation Stage) (DfES 2000). This will include maintained, private and voluntary provision. One aim is to create 'a level playing field' for children attending a range of settings (DfES 2006). These topics include personal and social well-being and skills; activities designed to promote positive attitudes to learning; opportunities to talk and discuss with each other and with adults; and to explore reading, writing and mathematics. Knowledge and understanding of the world is to be promoted, and also physical and creative development.

Pre-school early education for 3- and 4-year-olds, as practised in playgroups, nursery schools and classes, private and local authority day nurseries and integrated centres, has been studied across England, focusing on 2,800 children (the EPPE study: *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education*: Sylva *et al* 2003, 2004). Their evidence is that early exposure to quality pre-school is more effective the earlier children start after they reach 2 years old, the higher the quality of the education provided, and amongst children from disadvantaged groups. It seems that regular attendance, sustained over time, leads to particularly positive intellectual development, improved independence, concentration and sociability. Such positive effects, whether children attend for a long or short time, were found to be significantly greater than for children who did not attend. (However, as the authors note, this was not a randomised controlled trial, and non-attenders may differ in various ways from attenders.) Good quality home learning environments promoted children's intellectual and social development. A key finding is that better quality of provision happens where staff have higher qualifications, staff have leadership skills and there are long-serving staff; where trained teachers work alongside less qualified staff; and where there is strong parental involvement. Clearly, these features are expensive; and, as Sylva has noted (Gold 2006), it is critical for effective service-provision that early years centres are required to have trained teachers on the staff and to provide interlinked care and education. Currently, whilst 80 per cent of staff working with children in primary schools have degrees, only 20 per cent of those working with under-5s do (Morris 2007).

The EPPE children have now been followed to Year 5 of primary school (Sammons *et al* 2007). The findings are complex. The quality of the home learning environment continues to relate to reading and mathematics attainment. Once this factor has been taken into account, the quality of the pre-school experience continues to have a positive effect. School influences are becoming more influential in Year 5, however; effective schools (measured by independent analyses of national assessment results) account significantly for variation in the children's reading and mathematics attainment in Year 5. And these good schools compensate for children's early experience in poor quality pre-school provision or for having no pre-school experience at all.

We should also note the interim study of the impact of Sure Start programmes (Melhuish, Belsky and Leyland 2005). The authors are rightly cautious in presenting data only a few months into the interventions and they find only limited, small effects on the 9-month-old and 36-month-old children and their families (16,502 families in the first 150 Sure Start areas). The study suggests that the most disadvantaged families (defined as workless households,

teenage mothers and lone mothers) are the 'hardest to reach' (or, to put it another way, least likely to use the services offered), whilst slightly more advantaged families, having 'greater human capital', are more likely to use the services.

All in all, given these expansions in childcare provision, whilst they may be of varying quality, and whilst there are inequalities of access (favouring the well-to-do), primary schools today (compared to ten years ago) are receiving into their care more children with experience of out-of-home care, and more children with experience of the Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum. The later findings of the EPPE study point to continued impacts of the home learning environment, and of high quality pre-school services on children's work in Year 5; the quality of the school itself is influential both in affecting attainment and in compensating for poor or no pre-school experience.

2 ACTIVITIES OUT OF SCHOOL DURING THE PRIMARY SCHOOL YEARS

Family life

Children's right to live with parents is emphasised in the UNCRC (Articles 7, 9 and 11). As noted above (page 4), some children do not have the benefit of family life in decent conditions with at least one supportive parent, and this section has to be considered in that context. Most children do live with at least one parent, and there are now several qualitative studies providing information on how primary-age children experience daily life in a range of family types (Ribbens 1994; Pollard 1996; Moore, Sixsmith and Knowles 1996; O'Brien, Alldred and Jones 1996; Kelley, Mayall and Hood 1993; Morrow 1998; Neale, Wade and Smart 1998; Christensen, James and Jenks 2000; Brooker 2002; Mayall 2002; Harden 2006. I have not given an exhaustive set of references below for each point.)

Some themes emerge across these studies. Home is not only a physical space, but is a social construct, almost synonymous with family. Home/family provides structures and continuity, rooted in past time – for eating, division of labour, routines, celebrations, contacts with wider kin. These structures and continuities in the activities of daily life can be seen as factors leading family members to feeling a sense of solidarity with the members of their family.

These points contextualise the finding that children talk about the home and family as reliable, with parents 'being there' for them. Children tend to be loyal in their talk about family members, especially parents. Home is a safe place, especially by contrast with the dangers of public space English children have learned about.

However, these same factors reflect how adults control what happens at home. For children, this control may explain the common finding that children value highly the short spaces/times which are their 'free time', within the home or nearby. Children note that they have no 'free time' at school, where every part of the day, including playtime, is under adult control.

Children's accounts indicate that their position in the family includes *dependence*, *interdependence* and *independence*. As noted above in respect of pre-school children, children learn moral codes at home. They are both *apprentices* in the social and moral world of the family, and *active participants* in its practices and in constructing their own identities and lives. The moral learning which begins in early childhood includes in the primary-school years increasing responsibilities, for self-care, organising school-related materials, caring for other members of the family, jobs around the house. Primary-age children are competent and experienced family members. As noted in respect of under-fives, it is within the family that children stand the best chance of respect for themselves as people. An important point

here is that whilst psychological traditions stress that children move towards independence as moral beings, children themselves propose more complex understandings; they both seek independence and recognise the value of interdependence and reciprocity (Mayall 2002: Chapter 6; Holland et al 2000; Thomson and Holland 2002).

Another theme in children's accounts is that family members provide confidants, notably mothers. Children also, variously, report that other relatives, living close enough for interactive relations to develop, provide support and advice – grandparents, aunts, cousins (Morrow 1998; Mayall 2002). Some children derive great comfort and company from their pets. Mullender's work on children who live with domestic violence (1999; Mullender et al 2003) shows that siblings often provide help, solidarity and comfort.

Relations with brothers, sisters and friends vary widely across families and are characterised by a wide range of feelings and social practices (Morrow 1998), but relational processes with siblings contribute importantly to how children see themselves as people, how they feel and act – their identity, both in the family and in wider social worlds (Edwards et al 2006). This latter study makes the interesting and valuable point, too, that in an England where children are increasingly restricted to the home, older siblings can accompany and safeguard their younger siblings beyond its doors, and thus provide a way for young children to venture into the life of the neighbourhood. Children's accounts also indicate that older siblings will 'stand up for' their younger siblings in public places; and in school playgrounds. Having friends is a necessity at school, as defence as well as companionship, but friendships also allow children some independence from family life, and provide a shelter when life at home is stressful (Moore et al 1996; Mayall 2002).

Coping

The above points contextualise children's comments on how they deal with hard times, including the 'breakdown' of family life. Studies note children's abilities to care for disabled parents and other family members, as well as maintaining their school work (Aldridge and Becker 2002). Children stress the importance of being informed and of participating in decision-making; what matters too is the quality of relationships, including those between adults. In cases where parents separate, continuity is important for children, which allows them 'psychological travelling time' towards the new arrangements, so that they have time to learn to cope (Moore et al 1996: Chapter 9; Neale, Wade and Smart 1998; Piper 1999; Butler et al 2002; Flowerdew and Neale 2003; Hogan et al 2003; Smart 2003). A positive ethic of care – notions of interdependence, responsibility, respect, trust and commitment – can help children manage these transitions (Neale, Wade and Smart 1998: 42).

Food

There is current interest in whether nutrition may affect children's school work. A systematic review of the evidence for the effects of nutrition on learning, education and performance at school found no clear evidence. Of the 29 studies located that used a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT), most were from the USA and none provided conclusive evidence. However, the reviewers assert that whilst the impact of diet on educational attainment is still under consideration and UK studies are urgently needed 'the evidence for promotion of lower fat, salt and sugar diets, high in fruits, vegetables and complex carbohydrates, as well as promotion of physical activity remains unequivocal in terms of health outcomes for all school children' (Ells, Hillier and Summerbell 2006: 5; see also NICE 2006 on obesity). Perhaps healthy children work better than unhealthy ones. Another review of studies focused on children with severe dietary deficiencies and asserts that children with iron deficiencies sufficient to cause anaemia are at a disadvantage academically and that their cognitive performance appears to improve with iron therapy. Academic disadvantage has

not been found in children with zinc or iodine deficiency, and nor does therapy improve their performance (Taras 2005b).

Work

Old-style child development theory continues to be the dominant discourse about children in England (Woodhead 2000). Within this discourse children's contributions to the division of labour are not generally recognised. However, sociological approaches to children and childhood stress children as workers universally throughout history – in households, fields and factories, and nowadays, in Western industrialised countries, mainly at school (Qvortrup 1985). I have noted earlier (page 3) that children can also be understood as contributors to household welfare, from an early age (Rheingold 1982; Mayall 1994, 2002; Moore et al 1996). But the psychological idea that activity at school should be seen as part of the socialisation process which turns pre-social young children into competent adult worker-citizens remains influential; and children themselves may accept their low social status as workers. Some children associate work with adults, whose housework and paid work keep the household afloat; other children identify both school work and homework (for school) as work (Mayall 2002: Chapter 5).

Belonging to groups

I have not found much evidence on the extent and character of children's out-of-school organised activities (but see below under Leisure, play and sport). Most qualitative studies of daily life report that many children attend classes in, for instance, dance, music, religion and languages. But I think there is no large-scale data set on prevalence across a range of organised activities. I quote here some data from Woodcraft Folk, Scouts and Guides. Woodcraft Folk estimate that in 2006 about 3,750 children were members in the UK, almost all in England. This is a fall in membership by about a fifth since 2002. Data from Girlguiding UK says that currently one in seven 6-year-olds in the UK belongs to Rainbows, and a quarter of 8-year-olds are Brownies (80,000 girls are Rainbows and 250,000 are Brownies). There is a slight increase in Rainbows membership from 2005-6. As to the junior branch of the scouting movement, data about Cubs says that 132,302 girls and boys belonged in 2006, a decline from 150,108 in 2002.

Leisure, play and sport

Work and leisure

It has been observed that children's lives in England (and in other European countries) have become increasingly 'scholarised' (Qvortrup 2001): that time children spend doing school-related work has increased and their leisure time has consequently decreased (Edwards 2002; Alldred, David and Edwards 2002). English children attend school for six hours a day and are also asked to do homework for school, even in the first years of primary schooling (DfES 1999; Smith 2000). Further, mothers are asked to convert the home into an overtly educational establishment, by helping children with their homework (Edwards and Alldred 2000). Children's time outside formal schooling is increasingly spent under adult supervision in environments which can be described as 'more school'. Thus in order (principally) to facilitate mothers' paid work (and thus decrease family poverty), more children now spend time in 'breakfast clubs' and in after-school care centres (Smith and Barker 2000b; Holloway and Valentine 2000; Blatchford and Baines 2006). This expansion can be understood as part of a general move to ensure that children are supervised by adults at all times (McKendrick et al 2000); and that their activities are controlled by adults (James and James 2001). It has also been noted, through surveys in 1995 and again in 2006, that children's opportunity for play at school has been progressively reduced to the extent that 'playtimes' have been pushed aside, mainly to give more time for the basics of the National Curriculum and to

obviate poor behaviour by children at playtimes (Blatchford and Sumpner 1998; Blatchford and Baines 2006).

These developments are accompanied by decreases in children's access to public space. Thus in terms of independent mobility: fewer primary-school children (in 1990 as compared to 1970) were allowed, without an adult, to go to school, to go to leisure facilities and to use public transport (Hillman 1993; see for more recent data Harden 2000; O'Brien et al 2000; Mayall 2002: Chapter 6; Hillman 2006). Parents have reduced their children's opportunities for play in the neighbourhood (under the influence of traffic-danger and 'stranger-danger').

These changes in themselves provide cause for concern – in particular that children should be given opportunities for physical activity and play. This theme has been taken up by the government, which notes that children have a right to play; and that provision of safe playspaces will help children learn social skills, keep fit, and avoid obesity (DCMS 2006b). These views and associated interventions come in the wake of the establishment of training courses for pre-school workers, and also the development of a relatively new profession – playworkers, who have to work out how best to relate to children and to enable but not dominate their activities in organised play environments (Brown 2003a and b).

Play

Academic and professional concern about increases in adult control over children's use of time and space is one factor that accounts for moves to promote children's play outside immediate adult control. But deeper factors are implicated too. Sutton-Smith and Kelly-Byrne (1984) propose that psychological interest in play developed in industrialised societies out of distinctions made between work and play, adulthood and childhood; in societies where work (for adults) is obligatory and clock-controlled, play becomes idealised and seen as children's principal, valued activity. Play is the work of little children, says D. W. Winnicott.

The idea that children have rights to both education and leisure time, including the right to play, and that they should not be exploited if they also 'work' can be seen as rooted in historical formulations of the proper activities of childhood. The UNCRC both reflects and promotes that view. Article 31 expressly describes children's right to 'rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.' In their turn, States Parties must respect and promote these rights.

There is little public pressure for children's rights to engage in 'cultural life and the arts' outside school. Whilst children generally do learn the cultures of their family and wider kinship structures, the proposition that adults should enable children to engage more broadly with the cultural life of the nation is low on the agenda, either in general thinking or in social policies and programmes. I give a note later on cultural participation at school.

However, and in line with traditional psychological concepts of childhood, there is a huge literature on play, with emphasis on how it helps children develop; play is presented as an important arena for learning cognitively, physically and socially. This mainstream view has been proposed by some very eminent scholars, including Piaget. Play 'is a means... of learning... in a less risky situation'; and play also provides an excellent opportunity to try combinations of behaviours that would, under functional pressure, never be tried (Bruner 1976). Anthropologists, folklorists and sociolinguists are more interested in socio-cultural aspects of play, such as the communicative meaning of play in varying contexts. For them, play is particularly important in the years 0 to 12, but it continues through life (Fromberg and Bergen 2006: xv; Smith and Simon 1986). Meanwhile, cultural studies of childhood across the world have drawn attention to varieties of childhoods (Super and Harkness 1986;

Cole 1996); across the world children both play and work – for their household's welfare; and learning takes place during children's ordinary activities, including building and maintaining relations with other children and adults. Yet child development textbooks devote much space to play and virtually none to work (Woodhead 2000).

A cautious summary of research evidence suggests that whilst children do seem to learn during play, or perhaps consolidate learning through play, they may (also) learn those things elsewhere (Sutton-Smith 1979). Recent reviews of the literature are similarly cautious (Cole-Hamilton et al 2002; Manwaring and Taylor 2006). There are grave difficulties in proving that play leads to learning: what to include within 'play'; how to separate play from other activity (Strandell 2000). We learn from a wide variety of activities and relations; and to single out the effects of play is difficult if not impossible.

A current impetus for critical work on play is precisely the theoretical presentation of children as active agents, who participate in the construction of their own lives and their relations with other people. Studies point to interactions between children and other people as key arenas for learning (Faulkner, Littleton and Woodhead 1998; Greene 1999). As noted earlier, studies have focused on how children make sense of the environments they find themselves in, such as families and daycare centres where they learn local norms and adults' expectations, as well as how to make good relations with each other. It has been argued that children have a right to participate in the structuring and delivery of playspaces – including those at school, and that this participation may encourage their feelings of ownership (Burke 2005; Davis 2007). As more children spend more time on school premises, both before and after the main school day, the quality of school playgrounds matters more.

Participation in sport

Sport England (2003a) has studied trends in school-aged children's participation in sport, using data from three surveys (1994, 1999 and 2002). In 2002 (compared to 1994) fewer primary schools were dedicating two or more hours a week of curriculum time to PE. But some schools were compensating for this reduction by offering sports outside school time; thus 41 per cent of children in 2002 took part compared to 31 per cent in 1994. The three sports most popular among children, across all three surveys, are swimming, cycling and football; but involvement in cycling, walking and cricket has declined over the eight years; probably this relates to parental fears for children's safety. In compensation, perhaps, there were small increases in membership of clubs – slightly more primary-aged children belonged to a youth club or similar (55 per cent in 2002 compared to 51 per cent in 1994), and slightly more were members of sports clubs (41 per cent compared to 38 per cent). As to sports and exercise during the summer holidays, whilst 43 per cent of children in 2002 (compared to 42 per cent in 1994) claimed to do ten or more hours a week, a constant small proportion – 8 per cent – did less than an hour a week. Overall, it seems that slightly more children are involved in sports and physical activities nowadays than formerly, but that this takes place, less in free use of the neighbourhood and more in organised spaces.

In this connection, Sport England (2003b) identified an increase in numbers of leisure centres between 1995 and 2002, from 1492 to 1718. On the other hand, the National Playing Fields Association (2005) notes that 45 per cent of playing fields/sports pitches (34,000) in England have disappeared in the 13 years 1992 to 2005.

In summary the case for physical activity, including play, rests on long traditions that it is both natural to children and therefore a good thing and also that it is a means of learning; proving the latter has been difficult. The case can also be made (tentatively) that exercise has health benefits; it may help children be more alert and active in learning (see later). Current trends to restrict children's free activity in the neighbourhood, coupled with increases in

adult control of children's time in school-related environments, provide important contexts for initiatives aimed at offering children better access to time and space where they can act outside immediate adult control. The case for play is reflected in the UNCRC, and promoted by it.

Media

Nowadays virtually all children have acquired some media literacy before they start primary school. Whilst most, but not all, children have experience of stories in books, virtually all will have watched TV extensively and many will have worked – probably with a parent or sibling – on computer games (Marsh and Millard 2000: Introduction). These experiences mean that by the time they enter nursery education they already know a good deal about how a story works (that it has a plot, a beginning, middle and end, that it has characters, that often there is a problem to be resolved, that it may end happily). Children also know there are differing ways of presenting a story; it can be told through pictures – unmediated by words, or there may be a narrator; there may be 'real' people, or cartoon characters, or both; it may present ordinary life familiar to the children, or it may be sited outside the bounds of ordinary life, impossible but fascinating.

During the years when children attend primary school, television will continue to be the most important cultural medium for them at home. And the connection between television and other aspects of children's consumer culture – notably toys, books and videos – is also important. But most children will also interact with computers, again, mainly not for formal learning, but for engaging with popular culture. Varying figures on home ownership are given by varying agencies (Facer et al 2003: Chapter 2); perhaps 75 per cent of children (under-18s) have internet connections in their homes, but family ownership will depend largely on affluence; it is poorer families which currently lack the internet. Family ownership is also related to children's age; a study of 14 UK nurseries found that 40 per cent of children had a computer at home (Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford 2001). Further, access to these technologies will be mediated by children's own wishes and competencies, by parental and family beliefs, negotiations and practices, and also by the siting of the computer (Facer et al 2001; 2003). Children access the internet mainly at home and school; small proportions of children report using the internet elsewhere, for instance in libraries or at friends' houses (Livingstone and Bober 2004). A key point is that these technological resources for learning operate in social environments where children interact with other children and/or with adults. Children's use of computers (for fun and learning) will be mediated by the help ('scaffolding') given by other children and adults.

As the media diversify and interlink, through TV series, games, toys and books, the technologies now available to children are changing their experience, knowledge and social relations, as compared to pre-TV and -computer days. This point has implications for how schools respond (see later). However, Facer et al (2003: Chapter 9) argue that, although some 'armchair theorists' (p. 156) propose (on the basis of speculation) that the new technologies are revolutionising children's lives and identities, detailed analysis of children's daily lives (aged 9-10 and 12-13) suggests that usage varies widely and traditional activities with family and friends are more important. As the newer technologies become commonplace in households, they will take their place alongside, but not dominate the range of family activities (Facer et al 2003: chapter 4).

3 EVIDENCE ON IF/HOW CHILDREN'S OUT-OF-SCHOOL LIVES AND LEARNINGS ARE RECOGNISED AND INCLUDED WITHIN SCHOOL AGENDAS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

The question here is does out-of-school experience impact on school work? A complementary question is: does, and should, school respond to and build on children's out-of-school experience? In this section I draw together some evidence on these questions.

I note first that issues about the bearings of gender, culture, ethnicity, class, faith and national origin on primary education are dealt with in Primary Review research survey 5/1; and special educational needs in survey 5/2. Relations between home and school are the main topic of research survey 7/1 but to the extent that children's and parents' interests are indistinguishable, I shall consider these briefly. But, as I understand it, my topic is mainly the experience and knowledge that most children acquire at home, and how that relates to school experience.

Home knowledge – its effects on learning at school and school responsiveness

The difficult question whether home knowledge and learning affects progress at school is addressed in Pollard's (1996) detailed study of five children over three years. His choice of this very small number allows him to unravel the complexities of how children and their mothers worked through, more or less successfully, the challenges presented by school. The children, all 'white', came from 'relatively well-off and secure homes' (p. 306) where parents broadly shared the ideologies and practices of the school. Yet the cultures of the five homes varied and factors affecting children's trajectories through school life also varied; these points illustrate the difficulties of research in this area. Children faced two major challenges at school – making relations with other children, and coping with the curriculum – new sorts of learning and new sorts of teaching. The children varied in how successfully they faced these two sets of challenges, depending on the resources they brought to bear.

Ways in which schools can and should respond to children's knowledge acquired at home are explored by Fisher (1996: Chapter 1), using the Vygotskian idea of interactive, guided learning, where the more experienced (teachers) helps to move the less experienced (children) onwards in learning. She usefully summarises what is entailed for teachers in their interactions with children. Thus children's learning at home before they go to nursery or school has important elements: children are active in their social and cultural context; they organise their own learning experiences; they use language to learn; and they learn through interaction with others. She argues that there are clear implications for teachers: schools should provide meaningful and varied resources and experiences; teachers should capitalise on children's interests and knowledge; they should encourage conversations with children; and they should encourage interactions between children and between children and adults. Such a set of principles for schools and teachers can be seen as shifting responsibility and blame away from the home. Rather than conceptualise the home as the source of problems for which the school virtuously attempts to compensate, now the school is to value and build on the ways of learning children bring from home. The author argues that this strategy will help all children, regardless of social class and ethnicity, to achieve (cf. Christensen and Prout 2003).

The moral order of the school

However, other information suggests that this approach may be hard to implement. Reasons for variation in children's achievement may be profoundly rooted in school's social attitudes. Research has pointed to institutional racism in English schools, with teachers having low expectations of ethnic minority children, and failing to respect their linguistic patterns of speech (Ladson-Billings and Gillborn 2004). Furthermore, school agendas and parental views

of what school should do may conflict. Some parents may want direct teaching of the basics, others an exploratory, child-based approach. An Ofsted study (2003: paras 64-70) about 6-year-olds in three countries indicated that whilst Finnish and Danish parents broadly agreed with their school that the main issue was socialisation, English parents varied widely in their views: all wanted their children to enjoy school, but some favoured teaching in the 3Rs and homework (which the schools were providing) whilst others favoured more relaxed socialisation agendas. These varying views mirrored the difficulties the English teachers were having in combining Foundation Stage guidelines with Key Stage 1 agendas.

The study by Brooker (2002), referred to earlier, focuses on children in one reception class, during 1997-8, and describes how these problems work their way through so that by the end of the year children of Bangladeshi origin were doing less well (in school terms) than the other children. Both racism and clashing theories of education were implicated. The teacher did not recognise the competencies they had learned at home and systematically devalued their 'readiness' (in Piagetian formulae) to learn. The school proposed that children were to be autonomous investigators, using a range of classroom resources to demonstrate to the teacher their readiness for more formal learning and teaching. But the Bangladeshi parents had told their children to sit quietly, be obedient and learn to read and write. So not only were the children confused by the school's social and physical environment, but the parents devalued what their children were doing at school.

I noted earlier that children by the age of five know a good deal about their family's health beliefs and practices and they monitor and maintain their own health. Very little research has studied relations between children's knowledge and school activities. My own research, in the 1990s, indicated that at school, health maintenance was largely removed from children's control, and instead lay with the teachers, who decided when children might carry out health-related activities. Staff also decided whether a sickness bid by a child was acceptable, and in some cases when asthmatic children might use inhalers. Children's competence was devalued at school. Standards of provision at many schools were poor – for instance buildings, playspace, food, lavatories (Mayall 1994; Mayall et al 1996). However, since that time, there has been increased interest, sponsored by governments, in promoting healthy schools, mainly through voluntary effort by the schools themselves. A Healthy Schools programme launched in 1999 has encouraged schools to engage in a wide range of activities, and claims that 86 per cent of schools have signed up to a range of projects (Education Guardian 2007). The government has re-instated nutritional guidelines (abandoned by the government in 1980; see Mayall et al 1996: 42). Schools' beliefs and practices will vary, however, and I believe there is no recent research evidence on the impact of children's knowledge on school practices, or on school responsiveness to this knowledge. Deficit models of family health practices may or may not prevail.

More generally, a crucial element in children's experience at school is the school's moral evaluations of them. As noted earlier, studies of children at home indicate that whilst families vary, it is within the family that children stand the best chance of respect for themselves as persons. Studies of children's views of school consistently show that a key theme for children is respect; it is what children most want but find they do not get (Blishen 1969; Cullingford 1991; Mayall 1994; Pollard et al 1994; Alderson 2000b; Christensen and James 2001; Burke and Grosvenor 2003). Power relations between state school adults and children have remained virtually unaffected by years of reforms and initiatives. Indeed, current emphasis on competition and testing in the English education system not only increases stress levels among children, but contributes, for those who do not come top, to their feeling devalued (Butterfield 1993; Davies and Brember 1999). Respect for children's right to express their views in matters that affect them, and to have those views taken

seriously into account; their right to freedom of expression, and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds – these are enshrined in Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC. These rights should be recognised on ethical grounds; and recognition may also help children to continue to value their school experience as they get older (Lord and Harland 2000; UNICEF 2007).

The school as learning community

With the aim of diminishing systematic variations in school achievement relating to home background, an important kind of intervention builds (in some cases implicitly) on the children's social and moral competence when they arrive in school. These interventions focus on how the school can provide collaborative learning environments, within which children are valued and value each other, are clear what the aims of the educational enterprise are, help each other and move forward together. A recent review of the literature on classrooms as learning communities starts from their basic tenets. 'In a learning community, the goal is to advance collective knowledge and, in that way, support the growth of individual knowledge' (Scardamalia and Bereiter 1996, quoted in Watkins 2005: 43). This literature review indicates that as well as fostering children's happiness at school, the classroom as learning community boosts school achievement. Much of the research comes from the US, but UK practical experiments in changing the school towards a child-focused collaborative learning environment have also demonstrated that it raises achievement (as measured by national tests), as well as increasing happiness (Highfield Junior School 1997; MacGilchrist and Buttress 2005; Osler 2000). This work challenges the argument that the compulsory character of schooling militates against democratic practices in school (Jeffs 2002; Cockburn 1998; Devine 2002).

In this connection, the Ofsted (2003) study comparing 6-year-olds in three countries is instructive. The Danish and Finnish children, who were still (mostly) in pre-schools, were being prepared for school, with emphasis on a collective ethos, social development, co-operation, and respect for each other. Teachers encouraged discussions and collaborative work. In these respects (I note), the schools were building on the social and moral experience and knowledge which the children brought to their pre-school. By contrast, the English children were asked to engage with a more formal competitive curriculum, with emphasis on reading, writing and maths. In terms of academic success, the study notes that there are no simple pointers to what works best; in a comparative study across 31 countries, English children were doing better in the 3Rs at age 6 than the Danes and Finns, and at age 15 were still doing better than students in most countries; but at 15 the Finns outclassed all other countries; and the Danes did rather less well than the English and the Finns.

Teacher recognition of mothers' contributions to their children's education

The work of parents and especially mothers in providing emotional, intellectual and practical support for their children facing the challenges schools present to them has been described (David et al 1993; Mayall 1994; Pollard 1996; Brooker 2002). Parents can be seen as mediators of the new world of school, and they also provide an emotional, physical and material infra-structure and a known secure base from which the children set out. Pollard argues (1996: Chapter 11) that teachers should be taught to value the contributions mothers make to their children's education, at home and at school, especially through supporting children's identities, self-confidence and learning.

But though parents - mainly mothers - are held responsible by schools, they lack power and will vary in how far they can negotiate with the school. Factors here are how far school and home share beliefs about school agendas, parents' social and cultural capital, their familiarity with the school system, school beliefs about parents.

The EPPE report found that in pre-school centres that encouraged high levels of parent engagement in their children's learning, there were more intellectual gains for the children. 'The most effective centres shared child-related information between parents and staff, and parents were often involved in decision-making about their child's learning programme.' More particularly, children did better where the centre shared its educational aims with parents. This enabled parents to support children at home with activities or materials that complemented those experiences in the Foundation Stage (Sylva et al 2004: vii). An encouraging point here is that 'what parents do is more important than who they are' (as measured by social class or mother's qualifications). So they recommend that both pre-school and school settings should 'support' and educate parents (Sylva et al 2004: 57) so that they can engage in productive relations and activities with their children.

An intervention study by MacGilchrist and Buttress (2005) in five schools in Redbridge also found that it was beneficial to children's learning if parents and children were fully in the know about what the school, using the National Curriculum, said was to be learned and how to learn it. Parents were given clear information about their children's progress as considered against national expectations, so that they could support or 'scaffold' their children's learning (p.107-110). Four of the schools did better than the borough average over two years, in terms of achievement in basic national curriculum topics (English, Maths and Science) (2005: 157).

Play, sport, and cultural activities

It has been noted that giving children opportunities to play in school playgrounds increases children's ability to concentrate on their school work (Pellegrini and Blatchford 2002). These may be only short-term effects; a review of the literature on associations between physical activity and school performance finds short-term effects, for instance on concentration, but long-term improvement of academic performance as a result of physical activity has not been well substantiated (Taras 2005a). However, there are other arguments – including rights-based arguments – in favour of playtime. Teachers think playtime gives children the chance to let off steam, get physical exercise and develop social skills (Blatchford and Baines 2006: 8). Children themselves almost all vote in favour of playtime at school. Work on socio-dramatic play by children in school suggests increases in self-confidence (Smilansky 1990; Turner et al 2004)

Reduced play opportunities have been cited as a contributory factor in childhood obesity, and play opportunities are thought to increase both physical and social/mental fitness according to the Children's Play Council (2006). Their review of five studies concludes that 'there is clear evidence that primary school children expend more energy per minute in free outdoor play than in any other activity except school PE lessons. They get more exercise during playtime than during the whole day put together'. So as well as sports, opportunities for active play are important. Schools have to decide how far these playtimes should be adult-structured (Humphries and Rowe 1994) and how far children should be enabled to explore and make sense themselves of the space and the social relations inherent in it.

As regards children's right under Article 31 of the UNCRC to engage in 'cultural life and the arts' in school (see page xx), we may note that whilst education in arts topics is listed as part of the National Curriculum, it has considerably lower priority than 'core' topics. However, many schools aim to offer their children a rounded set of experiences, by giving them access to visual arts, music and drama through school trips and through importing arts groups (Downing et al 2003; Turner et al 2004).

Creativity can be seen as a motive force in both the arts and other areas of school activity. The arguments in favour of promoting creativity include helping children excel in work

(difficult to prove), raising their self-esteem (Turner et al 2004), preparing them for a future where flexibility, innovativeness and problem-solving will be valued by employers, and providing opportunities to follow their own interests and talents. It has been proposed that creativity can be a powerful contributing factor to achieving the five goals of Every Child Matters (DCMS 2006a). Over the last decade there has been a stream of publications urging the central relevance of recognising and fostering creativity in children at school (for example NACCE 1999; Sefton-Green and Sinker 2000; Roberts 2006). Government responses indicate acceptance of the point that active engagement fosters learning (DfES 2003; DCMS 2006a and b), but we have yet to see a response that seriously grapples with practice implications.

In summary, whilst proving links between play, physical activity and school performance is difficult, it seems important on rights grounds (and on grounds of common sense) that primary schools should maintain and promote spaces and times for activity outside the classroom-based curricular activities. Children's active engagement in school activities, using their creativity, is accepted by government in principle, but less so in practice.

Media

Does children's engagement with the new media, in their early years and during their primary-school years affect their work at school; do and should schools respond to and build on the experience and knowledge that children bring to school? If so, why?

Media-related work at nursery

Before children start primary school, many now go to nurseries and other centres. Nursery education is subject to guidance in the Foundation Stage on learning to use computers and on using them in other areas of the curriculum (QCA 2005). A study of one class, over three months, found no clear impact of children's experience with computers at home on their use of computers at nursery (Brooker and Siraj-Blatchford 2002); the finding that girls of Bangladeshi origin were learning less well at nursery than other children may reflect their low use of computers at home or other social and cultural factors affecting their behaviour. Children's activities round the computer at nursery had positive features; observation indicated five main types of group interaction: the activities supported language development; provoked enjoyable social interactions; led to scaffolding by more experienced children to help the less experienced; led to collaboration; and stimulated play not only round the computer but away from it, afterwards. Ways in which 7-8 year-old children 'scaffold' each other's computer-based work are also explored by Yelland and Masters (2007).

Media-related work at primary school

Does primary-age children's knowledge and experience out of school, in itself, make a difference to how they learn at school? A review of studies on the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in teaching and learning about 'moving image literacy' at school found connections between the cultural experience of young people (aged 5-16) and their media literacy; these findings suggest that if the content of the curriculum recognises these cultural experiences, motivation towards high quality work may result, and young people may be enabled to actively determine meaning and to develop social identities in relation to their media cultures (Burn and Leach 2004). A second systematic review of studies on the use of ICT in literature work (CD-Rom story-books, multi-media software packages, interactive computer books) also identified improved student motivation among younger children, among those not initially motivated and among ESL children. This review pointed to the critical importance of the teacher as mediator of the technology, especially through influencing the discourse students use (Locke and Andrews 2004).

On the issue of school responsiveness, there is some evidence regarding primary and secondary schooling. A systematic review of the use of ICT in literacy learning (over the years 5-16) examined twelve randomised controlled trials (RCTs); these were all 'relatively small'. The evidence reviewed suggests that for the present there is 'little evidence of benefit' (Torgerson and Zhu 2003). A second systematic review of the impact of networked ICT on 5-16 year olds' literacy in English found that the study authors assumed that networked ICT had a positive impact and explored how that impact was made; so the results should be considered as suggestive rather than conclusive (EPPI-Centre 2006). The authors of both of these reviews suggest that more and better studies are needed, and that until such time investment in the new technologies should be deferred.

At a less rigorous but still persuasive level, plenty of books and papers from the mid-1990s onwards offer information and examples about how ICT can be used, across the curriculum. In many of the examples given it seems clear that use of ICT was an important factor leading to good quality work; examples are given for literacy, numeracy, science and technology, social and environmental studies and the creative arts (for example McFarlane 1997; Straker and Govier 1997; Grey 2001; Riley 2003; Sutherland 2004).

Article 17 of the UNCRC notes the rights of children to information and material that can be accessed through the mass media. Computer literacy can be seen as a (protection) right for all children, to help them cope with new technologies in their daily and working lives. This right to computer literacy is indeed enshrined in the National Curriculum from the Foundation Stage onwards. And since ownership of the internet at home is structured by poverty – perhaps 25 per cent of children (all ages) do not have it – the school has a duty to compensate for these variations in home-ownership, in order to fit all children for a world where media literacy is important.

Media education

A further issue here concerns why (or not) schools should take serious account of children's popular culture – that is, encouraging children to develop critical skills in thinking about the media. Arguments in favour are presented by, for instance, Crook 1996; Marsh and Millard 2000: Chapter 10; Buckingham 2003, 2005a. Broadly, they are to do with children's social relations with schooling. Thus:

To do so respects children as people with knowledge and experience. In particular it respects their provision rights – that school should provide a curriculum that relates to the wider world; their protection rights, in helping them understand and so deal with the media (media education); their participation rights – collaborative, democratic working to make media; and to discuss media (see Merchant 2006).

Secondly, engaging with popular culture helps motivate children (as the systematic review quoted above found). Children are reported as responding with enthusiasm to teachers' willingness to engage with the cultures children experience at home (for example Greenhough et al 2006: 66).

Thirdly, children's knowledge of how stories work, derived from TV-viewing and computer games, can be harnessed to help them compose their own stories, through multi-media methods (for examples see Rickards 1996; Greenhough et al 2006: 66-69; Bearne and Wolstencraft 2006) Marsh and Millard (2000: Chapter 8).

Factors affecting schools' teaching of media literacy

However, many factors militate against schools taking an active part in media literacy work. First, teachers and schools are locked into national curriculum agendas, with their accompanying tests and competition between schools; this constraint is particularly acute at

primary levels. These agendas leave little space for innovation; they emphasise old-style reading and writing (little oral work). Some teachers may not see media education as a proper function of school. Some teachers resist the new technologies (Ofsted 2004) and some lack self-confidence in using and teaching media; they have no models from their own experience. Some may find it easier to opt for teaching technical skills, rather than to engage with the wider social dimensions of media use. Technologies are moving ahead so fast that schools cannot (or do not) keep up; there are many products on offer; it is difficult for schools to decide which to invest in; many are complicated and difficult to learn; and may not always work well (Marsh 2003). I also note that teachers (and the education system generally) have traditionally not been good at looking across the whole of children's lives and in thinking constructively about how home and school make up a whole for children.

POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH ISSUES

The government has a duty to respect children's protection, provision and participation rights. Part of this work is to counterbalance media hype which problematises and demonises children and childhood. Government should give high priority to reducing child poverty and to raising the social status of children, notably through recognition of children as the central resource for the future of the country.

If children's proper place up to age 5 is to be in 'early years' provision, then government should work towards a properly trained workforce, across the range of provision.

Evidence from modern psychological, sociological and rights perspectives indicates the relevance of building on children's experiential knowledge. The education service should consider how to respond to and build on what children bring to school.

The above has implications specifically for the teaching profession – how to balance their duty to deliver the curriculum required by the government with the desirability of recognising, respecting and incorporating into school agendas the knowledge and experience that children acquire out of school. It may be that returning to earlier models in English education which assigned more autonomy to teachers (as in Nordic models) could help to deal with this dilemma.

Research on children's ideas about home suggests that children conceptualise their home as a private place, which offers some scope for 'free time'; many children see clear boundaries between home and school. As children find that more of their time is 'school time', their protective stance towards their home may increase. Whilst current moves to increase 'parental involvement' and to construct the home as a school-related environment may be productive in some ways, they may be counterproductive if children – and their parents – resist them.

The scholarisation of childhood presents parents with dilemmas: how far to protect children from its incursions and how far to help them engage with its agendas. Parents have an important function in helping their children to have some free time. One issue here is whether and how far parents and their children consider use of the new technologies as constituting one kind of free time.

There is a long-running dilemma about parents as supporters of children's education, at home and school. Social policies may aim to educate parents in 'parenting skills' and in so doing may improve parenting, but also may imply that some parents are not doing well enough. This problem is exacerbated by two-faced thinking about mothers. For whilst mothers do most of the work for their children and are deemed responsible for outcomes,

they are also a common target for denigration. In this respect, emphasis on parental support may inadvertently increase inequalities for children in access to education.

Democracy in schools. Anti-democratic practices are likely to be challenged by children, especially as they get older, and not least to the extent that they have learned at home that democratic practices between children and adults are possible. Examples referred to earlier strongly suggest that within schools, and within the National Curriculum, teachers have found ways to respect children's participation rights. However a loosening of government control of the curriculum to allow teachers more scope for decisions about how best to work with children might help.

Finally, this report points to gaps in knowledge. I suggest a research programme of studies considering relations between children's out-of-school and school lives.

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APPENDIX 1

THE PRIMARY REVIEW PERSPECTIVES, THEMES AND SUB THEMES

The Primary Review's enquiries are framed by three broad perspectives, the third of which, primary education, breaks down into ten themes and 23 sub-themes. Each of the latter then generates a number of questions. The full framework of review perspectives, themes and questions is at www.primaryreview.org.uk

The Review Perspectives

- P1 Children and childhood
- P2 Culture, society and the global context
- P3 Primary education

The Review Themes and Sub-themes

- T1 Purposes and values**
 - T1a Values, beliefs and principles
 - T1b Aims
- T2 Learning and teaching**
 - T2a Children's development and learning
 - T2b Teaching
- T3 Curriculum and assessment**
 - T3a Curriculum
 - T3b Assessment
- T4 Quality and standards**
 - T4a Standards
 - T4b Quality assurance and inspection
- T5 Diversity and inclusion**
 - T5a Culture, gender, race, faith
 - T5b Special educational needs
- T6 Settings and professionals**
 - T6a Buildings and resources
 - T6b Teacher supply, training, deployment & development
 - T6c Other professionals
 - T6d School organisation, management & leadership
 - T6e School culture and ethos
- T7 Parenting, caring and educating**
 - T7a Parents and carers
 - T7b Home and school
- T8 Beyond the school**
 - T8a Children's lives beyond the school
 - T8b Schools and other agencies
- T9 Structures and phases**
 - T9a Within-school structures, stages, classes & groups
 - T9b System-level structures, phases & transitions
- T10 Funding and governance**
 - T10a Funding
 - T10b Governance

APPENDIX 2

THE EVIDENTIAL BASIS OF THE PRIMARY REVIEW

The Review has four evidential strands. These seek to balance opinion seeking with empirical data; non-interactive expressions of opinion with face-to-face discussion; official data with independent research; and material from England with that from other parts of the UK and from international sources. This enquiry, unlike some of its predecessors, looks outwards from primary schools to the wider society, and makes full though judicious use of international data and ideas from other countries.

Submissions

Following the convention in enquiries of this kind, submissions have been invited from all who wish to contribute. By June 2007, nearly 550 submissions had been received and more were arriving daily. The submissions range from brief single-issue expressions of opinion to substantial documents covering several or all of the themes and comprising both detailed evidence and recommendations for the future. A report on the submissions will be published in late 2007.

Soundings

This strand has two parts. The *Community Soundings* are a series of nine regionally based one to two day events, each comprising a sequence of meetings with representatives from schools and the communities they serve. The Community Soundings took place between January and March 2007, and entailed 87 witness sessions with groups of pupils, parents, governors, teachers, teaching assistants and heads, and with educational and community representatives from the areas in which the soundings took place. In all, there were over 700 witnesses. The *National Soundings* are a programme of more formal meetings with national organisations both inside and outside education. They will take place during autumn 2007 and will explore key issues arising from the full range of data thus far. They will aim to help the team to clarify matters which are particularly problematic or contested and to confirm the direction to be taken by the final report. As a subset of the National Soundings, a group of practitioners - the *Visionary and Innovative Practice (VIP) group* – is giving particular attention to the implications of the emerging evidence for the work of primary schools.

Surveys

30 surveys of published research relating to the Review's ten themes have been commissioned from 69 academic consultants in universities in Britain and other countries. The surveys relate closely to the ten Review themes and the complete list appears in Appendix 3. Taken together, they will provide the most comprehensive review of research relating to primary education yet undertaken. They will be published in thematic groups from October 2007 onwards.

Searches

With the co-operation of DfES/DCSF, QCA, Ofsted, TDA and OECD, the Review is re-assessing a range of official data bearing on the primary phase. This will provide the necessary demographic, financial and statistical background to the Review and an important resource for its later consideration of policy options.

Other meetings

In addition to the formal evidence-gathering procedures, the Review team meets members of various national bodies for the exchange of information and ideas: government and opposition representatives; officials at DfES/DCSF, QCA, Ofsted, TDA, GTC, NCSL and IRU; representatives of the teaching unions; and umbrella groups representing organisations involved in early years, primary education and teacher education. The first of three sessions with the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee took place in March 2007. Following the replacement of DfES by two separate departments, DCSF and DIUS, it is anticipated that there will be further meetings with this committee's successor.

APPENDIX 3

THE PRIMARY REVIEW INTERIM REPORTS

The interim reports, which will be released in stages from October 2007, include the 30 research surveys commissioned from external consultants together with reports on the community soundings and the submissions prepared by the Cambridge team. They are listed by Review theme below, although this will not be the order of their publication. Report titles may be subject to minor amendment.

Once published, the interim reports, together with briefings summarising their findings, may be downloaded from the Review website, www.primaryreview.org.uk.

1. *Community Soundings: report on the Primary Review regional witness sessions*
2. *Submissions received by the Primary Review*
3. *Aims and values in primary education. Research survey 1/1 (John White)*
4. *The aims of primary education: England and other countries. Research survey 1/2 (Maha Shuayb and Sharon O'Donnell)*
5. *The changing national context of primary education. Research survey 1/3 (Stephen Machin and Sandra McNally)*
6. *The changing global context of primary education. Research survey 1/4 (Hugh Lauder, John Lowe and Dr Rita Chawla-Duggan)*
7. *Children in primary schools: cognitive development. Research survey 2/1a (Usha Goswami and Peter Bryant)*
8. *Children in primary schools: social development and learning. Research survey 2/1b (Christine Howe and Neil Mercer)*
9. *Teaching in primary schools. Research survey 2/2 (Robin Alexander and Maurice Galton)*
10. *Learning and teaching in primary schools: the curriculum dimension. Research survey 2/3 (Bob McCormick and Bob Moon)*
11. *Learning and teaching in primary schools: evidence from TLRP. Research survey 2/4 (Mary James and Andrew Pollard)*
12. *Curriculum and assessment policy: England and other countries. Research survey 3/1 (Kathy Hall and Kamil Øzerk)*
13. *The impact of national reform: recent government initiatives in English primary education. Research survey 3/2 (Dominic Wyse, Elaine McCreery and Harry Torrance)*
14. *Curriculum alternatives for primary education. Research survey 3/3 (James Conroy and Ian Menter)*
15. *The quality of learning: assessment alternatives for primary education. Research survey 3/4 (Wynne Harlen)*
16. *Standards and quality in English primary schools over time: the national evidence. Research survey 4/1 (Peter Tymms and Christine Merrell)*
17. *Standards in English primary schools: the international evidence. Research survey 4/2 (Chris Whetton, Graham Ruddock and Liz Twist).*
18. *Quality assurance in primary education. Research survey 4/1 (Peter Cunningham and Philip Raymont)*
19. *Children, identity, diversity and inclusion in primary education. Research survey 5/1 (Mel Ainscow, Alan Dyson and Jean Conteh)*
20. *Children of primary school age with special needs: identification and provision. Research survey 5/2 (Harry Daniels and Jill Porter)*

21. *Children and their primary education: pupil voice*. Research survey 5/3 (Carol Robinson and Michael Fielding)
22. *Primary education: the physical environment*. Research survey 6/1 (Karl Wall, Julie Dockrell and Nick Peacey)
23. *Primary education: the professional environment*. Research survey 6/2 (Ian Stronach, Andy Pickard and Elizabeth Jones)
24. *Teachers and other professionals: training, induction and development*. Research survey 6/3 (Olwen McNamara, Rosemary Webb and Mark Brundrett)
25. *Teachers and other professionals: workforce management and reform*. Research survey 6/4 (Hilary Burgess)
26. *Parenting, caring and educating*. Research survey 7/1 (Yolande Muschamp, Felicity Wikeley, Tess Ridge and Maria Balarin)
27. *Children's lives outside school and their educational impact*. Research survey 8/1 (Berry Mayall)
28. *Primary schools and other agencies*. Research survey 8/2 (Ian Barron, Rachel Holmes, Maggie MacLure and Katherine Runswick-Cole)
29. *The structure and phasing of primary education: England and other countries*. Research survey 9/1 (Anna Eames and Caroline Sharp)
30. *Organising learning and teaching in primary schools: structure, grouping and transition*. Research survey 9/2 (Peter Blatchford, Judith Ireson, Susan Hallam, Peter Kutnick and Andrea Creech)
31. *The financing of primary education*. Research survey 10/1 (Philip Noden and Anne West)
32. *The governance, administration and control of primary education*. Research survey 10/2 (Maria Balarin and Hugh Lauder)



... children, their world, their education

The Primary Review is a wide-ranging independent enquiry into the condition and future of primary education in England. It is supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, based at the University of Cambridge and directed by Robin Alexander. The Review was launched in October 2006 and aims to publish its final report in autumn 2008.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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