

Start lessons at six, says report

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By Channel 4 News

Schoolchildren should not start formal lessons until they are six, according to a major new report - but the government has already rejected the idea. Cathy Newman reports.

The Cambridge primary review found children respond better to [play-based learning](#) at a young age, and that there was no evidence to suggest it would hold them back in later life.

The report also criticised the government for being too "prescriptive" and imposing "Stalinist overtones" by narrowing the curriculum and stressing out children with too many tests.

But the review did not suggest children should start school any later than at present. Find out how the school starting age [compares around the world here](#).

Chairman of the review Dame Gillian Pugh said: "If you introduce a child to too formal a curriculum before they are ready for it then you are not taking into account where children are in terms of their learning and their [capacity to develop](#)."

She added: "If they are already failing by the age of four-and-a-half or five it's going to be quite difficult to get them back into the system again."

The review also called for [the Sats tests](#) at the end of [primary school](#) to be scrapped, and criticised the testing system for making the entire curriculum too narrow.

It said Sats should be replaced with assessment across all subjects, and ranking of pupils' grades must be separated from the rating of schools' performance as a whole.

However, there is little sign of the review's findings changing education policy because the Government has dismissed it.

[Schools Minister](#) Vernon Coaker described the proposals as a "backward" step and said the world had "moved on" since the review was started.

Mr Coaker said a school starting age of six "would be completely counter-productive, we want to make sure children are playing and learning from an early age and to give parents the choice for their child to start in the September following their fourth birthday".

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