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Annual tests stressing primary school children in UK

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LONDON - The government policy of conducting national tests for 7 to 11-year-olds is causing great stress among the students, their parents as well as their teachers, according to a new study released by Primary Review.

The study said that the SATs exams curbed creativity among students and encouraged unnecessary worries among parents as well. The Cambridge University-based review was collated after 87 discussions and meetings across England. These meetings involved community representatives, employers, religious leaders, parents, governors, heads, teachers and children.

One person was quoted by the review as saying that students did not benefit from SATs, but estate agents reaped higher benefits as house prices were liable to shoot up in areas having schools with optimum performance in these tests.

The Primary Review report also quotes children and says they are concerned with the condition of the globe especially climate change and terrorism. Children admitted to being scared by the SAT tests, but acknowledged that they gave an accurate assessment of where they stood on the academic ladder.

"For a government which has invested so much in its drive to raise educational standards, there is a battle for hearts and minds to be won," Primary Review director Professor Robin Alexander said. "The evidence from this one strand of the Primary Review's evidence suggests that standards may have been too readily equated with quality, and that it is time to start exploring the difference between them."

Children also said they were bored by the rigid curriculum and had to concentrate on the tests all the time.

Reacting to the report, a spokeswoman for the Department for Children, Schools and Families dismissed suggestions that children were stressed because of the tests. "The government does not share the view that children are over-tested. Tests help parents and teachers monitor the progress of children and ensure they get the help they need," she added.

This report by the Primary Review was the first of the 32 planned interim reports. The final recommendations are likely to be published in October next year.

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