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## Debate - Issue of the Day

For journalists, politicians, and interested members of the public, 'Issue of the Day' provides a snapshot of responses and views on the leading issues of the day.

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Friday, 12 Oct 2007 09:50

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#### Report author explains results

*Friday, 12 Oct 2007 12:45*

A report published today by the Cambridge-based Primary Review has outlined the shifting fears felt by children and parents from those of a generation ago.

Noticeably today, there are concerns over excessive school testing and the impact of consumer culture on children.

Primary Review director Robin Alexander, explained this particular research paper, *Community Soundings*, had held 87 witness sessions across the country.

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It is the first of 32 interim reports due to be published by the research group and represents the most widespread review of primary education for 40 years.

Speaking today on the BBC's *Today* programme, Mr Alexander said: "We talked with people inside and outside schools about primary education today and the world in which children are growing up.

"Every generation has its stresses and what people wanted to talk about to us was the stress caused by say government tests, the curriculum within the school, but then life outside school also."

The issue of safety was a recurrent concern, the report finds, with many teachers and parents expressing fears about anti-social behaviour and road safety.

Although every generation arguably has its own set of problems, the report finds growing inequalities in British society were developing distinctly modern childhood problems.

A decline in family life was sensed by many interviewees, as well as a lack of social cohesion and diminishing generational respect.

Mr Robinson continued to say there was "a concern about values, the kinds of values to which young children are subject; materialism, consumerism, individualism and so on.

"Everyone is worried about pressures on children as they're growing up in every generation I suspect.

"But it's the nature of the pressures [which have changed]."

The most positive finding of the research was that primary schools were perceived to be highly beneficial community facilities.

Explaining the consensus, Mr Robinson said: "The interesting thing for us was a sense that there are these concerns, these pressures, these anxieties, but the beacon of light was the schools themselves, very, very positive view wherever we went and whoever we spoke to."

This week, chancellor Alistair Darling

announced the government would be providing additional funding to help build primary schools in every community.

This initiative will go some way to detract attention from the curriculum criticisms.