

# Teachers struggle to balance cultures and 'inclusiveness'

Ruth Gledhill, Religion Correspondent

Teachers in primary schools struggle to balance "inclusiveness" with respect for different faiths and cultures, according to a report.

*Community Soundings*, by Cambridge University's Primary Review group, exposed the "deep anxiety" about modern life being suffered by primary school children and their parents. It also found that Muslim children are under more pressure than most because many attend madrassas, or religious schools, as well as ordinary primary schools.

According to the report teachers "spoke of the difficulty of balancing inclusion and shared values with respect for different faiths and cultures".

Researchers based their findings on 87 discussions with groups of children, parents, teachers and others, with 750 people taking part. One of the schools involved was a Church of England school in a deprived area of Yorkshire, and another was in state primary in a largely Muslim community.

The report found: "Religion is an inescapable element in the current cultural melting pot."

At one session, researchers met Jewish, Muslim and Christian religious leaders. "For them, faith was both a fact of cultural life and a necessary part of education," the report says.

The Cambridge report came in the same week that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, condemned British society for treating children as if they were expendable.

The Cambridge review called for recognition in schools that "faith of one kind or another is intrinsic to culture and that it needs to be respected, whatever form it takes".

Teachers should emphasise the common ground between the major faiths, in particular the monotheistic ones, the report says.

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