

National Association for the Teaching of English

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NATE News Story**Primary Review publishes compelling reports**

Friday December 14th, 2007

Inclusion in schools and 'learning styles' challenged

Hard on the heels of the Government's Children's Plan, and contributing to the debate about young children's wellbeing and education, come four further reports specially commissioned for the independent Primary Review, the biggest enquiry into English primary education for forty years.

Drawing on over 500 published sources, today's reports assess the latest published research on how young children develop and learn, how their differing needs are identified, and how equitably the education system meets these needs.

The two reports on children's learning stress, for all children, the importance of concentrating on the cognitive, social and linguistic prerequisites of learning during the early and primary years. They show the need for pretend play in the early years, and of structured talk and peer collaboration at the primary stage, neither of which is as well developed in some schools as it needs to be, and of the essential role in children's learning of all those with whom they interact - parents, carers and peers as well as teachers.

Drawing on recent brain research one of the surveys challenges conventional wisdom about left-brain/right-brain learning and 'learning styles'; and rejects the long-held belief that there are developmental stages in learning to think.

The reports have considerable implications for the work of teachers and those who train them.

The other two reports, on diversity, inclusion and special educational needs, underline the considerable diversity of the primary pupil population, yet they also warn against simplistic assumptions about children's differences and needs on the basis of the statistical categories currently in use.

They point to inequalities in the system for identifying and meeting children's special educational needs (SEN), with some groups of children more likely to be statemented than others with comparable needs, and considerable inconsistencies in local provision.

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inclusion in the primary sector is slow, and that teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to support children with SEN in mainstream primary schools.

These reports complement the four published on 23 November which assessed research on children's lives outside school, changing patterns of parenting and caring, and the relationship between schools and other agencies.

Together, this fast-growing body of evidence from the Primary Review contributes not just to the Review's own deliberations but also to the current debate about the Government's Children's Plan.

Today's reports have been commissioned as evidence to the Primary Review, which however reserves judgement on their findings pending its assessment of the full range of evidence. They are:

- Children's Cognitive Development and Learning, by Usha Goswami and Peter Bryant (Primary Review Research Survey 2/1a).
- Children's Social Development, Peer Interaction and Classroom Learning, by Christine Howe and Neil Mercer (Primary Review Research Survey 2/1b).
- Children in Primary Education: demography, culture, diversity and inclusion, by Mel Ainscow, Jean Conteh, Alan Dyson and Katherine Runswick-Cole (Primary Review Research Survey 5/1).
- Learning Needs and Difficulties Among Children of Primary School Age: definition, identification, provision and issues, by Harry Daniels and Jill Porter (Primary Review Research Survey 5/2).

FOR BRIEFINGS/SUMMARIES AND COPIES OF THE FULL REPORTS: download at www.primaryreview.org.uk

To comment on the issues raised in the report, email [here](#)

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The Primary Review –
<http://www.primaryreview.org.uk>