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February 20, 2009...5:54 pm

Cambridge Primary Review puts DCSF on the defensive

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It's a shame that the DCSF response to (RSA Fellow) Robin Alexander's thoughtful [Cambridge Primary Review](#) was so - well - unthoughtful.

The [report](#) includes a core emphasis on dispelling the "policy-led belief that breadth and standards are incompatible, when the evidence consistently shows the opposite – that one requires the other and the best schools achieve both". It calls for higher standards across the curriculum, with the humanities and arts being given the same emphasis and quality of teaching as numeracy, literacy and science teaching.

And the [response](#) from the department?

"English children were recently recognised as being the highest achieving in maths and science among European countries.

Which is great, but is that it?

Either the department's argument is that a narrow emphasis on success in maths and science tests to the detriment of other elements of the education of children does in fact result in those children succeeding in maths and science tests.

Or, and I suspect this is more likely, the defensive nature of the response means there is no attempt to engage with a counter-intuitive, but well evidenced, assertion that breadth begets success even against narrow measures.

There isn't even any of the usual attempt to argue that the department deplores teaching to the test ([see](#) Ed Balls' comments on this last year) or that all areas of the curriculum are important. For once the rhetoric matches what the policy drivers seem to imply.

We need open, accessible debates about education that help the public get into some of the complexity of these issues.

The DCSF's blank-faced autopilot response to such a thorough and ambitious review doesn't help. The public deserve better.

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