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Date: 19/10/09

Cambridge Primary Review publishes final report

The Cambridge Primary Review, based at the University's Faculty of Education, has published its final report on the condition and future of English primary education.

The report is the culmination of a three year enquiry which received more than a thousand submissions from organisations and individuals, drew on more than 4000 published sources and made use of 28 specially commissioned research surveys.

The Review has produced 31 interim reports but the final report, edited by Review Director Professor Robin Alexander of the University of Cambridge, makes 78 formal conclusions and 75 recommendations for future policy and practice in primary education.

It found England's primary schools under intense pressure, but generally doing a good job. The Review concludes that since 1997, investment in primary education has risen dramatically, with many policies having a positive impact, but that three broad concerns were repeatedly brought up by those who gave submissions to the enquiry. These were the condition of childhood today; the state of society and the world in which children are growing up; and the focus and impact of government policy.

The report questions the conventional wisdom that childhood is in crisis, noting that children were the Review's most

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upbeat witnesses, and emphasising the research evidence on how much young children know, understand and can do. It contends that the real childhood crisis concerns the fate of those children whose lives are blighted by poverty, disadvantage, risk and discrimination, and concludes that here, governments are right to intervene.

However while the government's childhood agenda is applauded, its standards agenda is viewed less favourably - not from opposition to standards and accountability but because of the educational damage the apparatus of targets, testing, performance tables, national strategies and inspection is perceived to have caused for questionable returns. The report maintains that the prevailing definition of 'standards' is too narrow and the picture and agenda are compromised by methodological problems.

The report calls for both a more rigorous concept of standards and different approaches to assessment and inspection. In short, it concludes that assessment at the end of the primary stage should continue, but that it should be done differently.

Launch events for the Review's final report will be held in London and Cambridge on Monday 19th October. These will be followed by 14 regional conferences for professional leaders from schools, teacher training and research.

Further detail on these and on the final report of the Cambridge Primary Review can be found at the [Review's website](#).

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