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# News

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**Too much pressure on today's primary school children is leading to stress and "deep anxiety" about modern life, a Cambridge University-based study has found.**

The Primary Review report indicates that national tests at

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ages seven and 11, combined with general concern about problems like anti-social behaviour and climate change, are forcing today's children to grow up too soon.

The independently-funded Review is based in the University's Faculty of Education and is the biggest inquiry into English primary education for 40 years.

Researchers travelled round the country and had more than 80 meetings with children, teachers, parents, governors, community representatives and religious leaders.

Together, the results painted a picture of concern that today's children are being forced to grow up too quickly, while the prospects for the society and world they will inherit look increasingly perilous.

The consultees expressed concern about the stress on young children and their teachers caused by national tests at ages seven and 11, as well as about the resulting distortion of the national curriculum.

Outside school, they were worried about the condition of family life, the decline in mutual respect and social cohesion, the dominance of anti-social behaviour, materialism and the cult of celebrity, and the growing crisis of climate change.

"For a government which has invested so much in its drive to raise educational standards, there is a battle for hearts and minds to be won," Primary Review director, Professor Robin Alexander, said.

“What we heard confirms that the health of a national educational system cannot be fully captured by the term ‘standards’, critically important though standards are.

“The evidence from this one strand of the Primary Review's evidence suggests that standards may have been too readily equated with quality, and that it is time to start exploring the difference between them.”

Today's interim report will be followed by 31 more, designed to stimulate feedback before the final report in 2008.

In general, it found strong support for the work of primary schools, in spite of the deep anxiety about the condition of childhood today and the society in which children are growing up.

The report also recorded that where it was possible to take direct action, be it through children working on projects for sustainable development, teachers taking control of the curriculum or schools using their entrepreneurial talent to enhance staffing and facilities, the abiding sense of gloom was replaced by a more optimistic outlook.

“This is just one piece in the Primary Review's jigsaw of evidence, so it doesn't tell the whole story,” Professor Alexander said.

“But it takes the educational temperature on these and other matters at a critical time, and it reveals what teachers, parents, children and communities are most concerned about. We hope that people will tell us what

they think about the issues raised here and in other interim reports which we will be publishing during the next few months.”







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