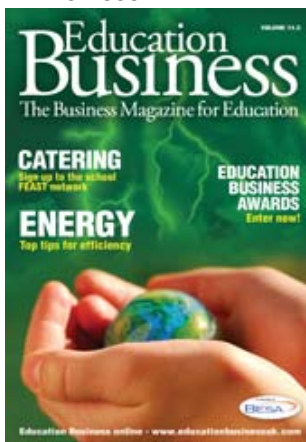


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Report suggests school starting age should be raised to six

Cambridge Primary Education Review outlines primary schools conditions and future

The Cambridge Primary Review has outlined aims for primary school children to start formal education when they are six years old.

Most children currently start formal learning at age four, but the review states that extending the foundation stage to age six could strengthen early years provision in its quality and staffing so that children are socially, linguistically and experientially ready for formal learning

The 608 page report , entitled Children, their World, their Education, outlines the condition and future of English primary education, following a three year enquiry.

It states that investment in primary education has risen dramatically since 1997. However, it outlines three main concerns as the condition of childhood today the state of the society and world in which children are growing up, and the focus and impact of government policy.

Aside from raising school starting age to six, it also aims to bring in new structures, such as strengthening early years provision and replacing KS1 and 2 by a single primary phase.

The review is the most comprehensive enquiry into English primary education system for 40 years, as there has been no investigation into the education system since the 1967 Plowden enquiry.

The report is set out in five parts. Part One tracks the primary education policy since the 1960's. Part Two examines children's development and learning; their lives outside school and their needs, aspiration and prospects.

Part Three explores what goes on in primary schools from the formative early years, including aim, curriculum, assessment and school organisation. Part Four deals with the system as a whole; including ages and stages, teacher training and funding and policy. Part Five draws everything together with 78 formal conclusions and 75 recommendations for future policy and practice.

Schools Minister Vernon Coaker disagreed with the proposal, telling GMTV: "For many of those children coming into school, it is of crucial importance they are in that formal but appropriate type learning environment so they can gather the skills and get the skills they need as they go through life."

"Leaving it to six would leave many of our children, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, it would mean they would start a long way behind others."

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