

# Children face too much too young

**NEW research has suggested children in England may be starting school too early.**

Currently children in England must be in a primary school by their fifth birthday, although many start nursery or reception classes from the age of three.

A report by the Primary Review, an organisation based at Cambridge University, has looked into primary education and found that starting at an early age may not have long-term benefits.

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The report even suggested that as children were spending less time with their families than their European counterparts, it could be leading to them misbehaving in school rather than learning.

However, Valerie Parker, headteacher of the Queen of Hearts nursery in Kettering, disagreed with the findings.

She said: "All our children learn through play. Everything they learn is in a fun way, as children are not ready to be taught at that age.

"Children absorb more if they enjoy something and it is not until they go to school and are faced with pressures that problems arise.

"The problem is not the fact children are learning at a young age but that politicians who do not understand the education system are interfering."

The county council's spokesman for children and young people Joan Kirkbride said: "It is wrong to have four-year-olds in formal teaching.

"I have two young Norwegian grandchildren and their education is a lot less formal.

"What we don't want to do is lose children's interest in learning too young.

"The system of examining children at a young age needs to be examined to make sure they are not suffering undue stress too early in life."

Swedish student Andrea Malmberg, 18, is currently on an exchange to Lodge Park Technology College in Corby.

He said: "In Sweden we start school at seven and I think anything before this is way too early.

"You need to be a child with no responsibility before you start education, then you are more ready to learn."

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