

## **HERALD** - News for Harlow and the surrounding area

### **Cambridge Primary Review calls for an end to SATs testing in primary schools**

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STOP SATs testing in primary schools - that is one of the key recommendations in a new report published today (October 16).

Following a three-year inquiry, the Cambridge Primary Review has published its final report on the condition and future of English primary education. The report draws on more than 4000 published sources, together with: 28 specially-commissioned surveys; 1052 written submissions from leading organisations and individuals and an extensive trawl of official data.

The report found that England's primary schools under intense pressure, but in good heart and in general doing a good job. Since 1997, investment in primary education has risen dramatically and many policies have had a positive impact.

While the report applauds the Government's childhood agenda, its standards agenda is viewed less favourably - 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 reports says the prevailing definition of standards is too narrow and calls for a more rigorous concept of standards and different approaches to assessment and inspection.

The review proposes 12 aims and 13 principles for primary education.

\* New structures. Strengthen early years provision; extend foundation stage to age six; replace Key Stage one and two with a single phase; examine feasibility of raising school starting age to six in line with these changes.

\* Narrow the gaps. Continue to give priority (a) to narrowing the gap between vulnerable children and the rest, and (b) to reducing England's long tail of underachievement.

\* Undertake full review of special educational needs, covering definitions, procedures and provision.

\* Redefine standards as excellence in all aspects of the curriculum to which children are entitled, not just the 3Rs.

\* Tackle unfinished curriculum business. Put implementation of Government's Rose review on hold pending consideration of the Cambridge Review's more comprehensive analysis of the problems.

\* Reform assessment. Retain formal assessment at the end of primary, but stop current SATs, separate assessment for learning from assessment for accountability and broaden the scope and methods of both.

\* End the 'state theory of learning' embodied in post-1997 strategies and policies. Support teaching grounded in repertoire, evidence and principle rather than recipe. Strengthen what separates expert teachers from the rest.

\* Undertake full review of primary school staffing so as to ensure that every school has access to the expertise that a modern primary education requires.

\* Reform initial teacher training. Diversify ITT routes in line with the staffing review and new teaching roles. Replace training for compliance by evidence-based teaching skills, curriculum expertise and proper analysis of educational issues. Promote a more informed discourse on subjects, knowledge and skills.

\* Replace current TDA professional standards by a framework properly validated by research on expertise, professional development and pupil learning. Reform CPD so that it balances support for less secure teachers with freedom for the experienced and talented.

\* Extend school and professional partnership. Strengthen both curriculum provision and community engagement through school clustering, federation, all-through schools and the exchange of expertise.

\* Protect rural schools and middle schools against cost-cutting closure. Achieve a better fit between school design and function, with more specialist and outdoor space. Protect/expand school libraries. ICT and books are not alternatives: books remain fundamental to children's lives and education.

\* Reverse tide of centralisation. Radically re-balance responsibilities of DCSF, NDPBs, LAs and schools.

\* End primary/secondary funding differential and redirect funds from national bodies to schools. Set increased costs of school staffing reforms against big savings from ending the national strategies and reducing national infrastructure.

\* Towards a new discourse. As important as the specifics is the need for a more mature and informed way of talking about primary education, free from the polarisation, myth-making and mud-slinging of recent years. The debate should exemplify, not negate, what education is about. As the country approaches a general election, this is a particular challenge for political leaders.

The report has been written by a team of 14 authors and its 608 pages and 24 chapters end with 78 formal conclusions and 75 recommendations for future policy and practice.

Following launch events in Cambridge and London on Monday (October 19), there will be 14 regional conferences for professional leaders from schools, teacher training and research.

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