

Echo Letters, October 21 2009

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_____ by Pamela Hoey,

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Education reaction

IN 1997 when Tony Blair strode into Downing Street with the Union flags fluttering in the breeze, teachers might not have universally greeted it as the bliss of a new dawn, but there was a quiet hope in staffrooms that the worst years of a prescriptive national curriculum, overbearing inspections and death by testing league tables were behind them.

It wasn't an auspicious start. There were the trite slogans, 'zero tolerance of failure'; the 25 worst performing schools were named and shamed; Chris Woodhead was reappointed as the head of Ofsted.

The Cambridge Review represents an attempt to change the sterile primary curriculum, but the knee-jerk rejection by education Minister Ed Balls doesn't come as a surprise.

Scotland and Wales abandoned tests for seven and 11 year-olds, almost every organisation

involved in education from the unions to the royal societies and research institutions called for radical changes or the abandonment of national tests. Yet the government is left, like a drowning man, clinging to the shipwreck that is the testing regime.

Richard Knights, L12