

Extend EYFS to age six and abolish KS1, says Cambridge Review

By Melanie Defries, Nursery World, 16 October 2009

The Early Years Foundation Stage should be extended to age six and Key Stage one should be abolished, according to the final report from the Cambridge Primary Review.

The study, which was compiled from hundreds of written submissions, meetings and surveys of published research, argues that delaying the start of formal schooling to age six would give children positive attitudes to learning and the time to develop language and study skills that would boost their progress later on. It says that the national curriculum for primary years should be redesigned as a single stage for children aged between six and 11, which would follow on from the EYFS.

The primary framework recommended by the study would consist of 12 educational aims, divided into three groups:

- The needs and capacities of the individual – well-being, engagement, empowerment and autonomy
- The individual in relation to others and the wider world – encouraging respect and reciprocity, promoting independence and sustainability, empowering local, national and global citizenship, celebrating culture and community
- Learning, knowing and doing, exploring and making sense, fostering skill, exciting the imagination, enacting dialogue.

These aims would be achieved through eight 'domains' – arts and creativity, citizenship and ethics, faith and belief, language, oracy and literacy, mathematics, physical and emotional health, place and time, and science and technology.

The review highlights the importance of raising the qualifications of the early years workforce and says that there should be a unified children's workforce strategy, bringing together the responsibilities of the Training and Development Agency for Schools and the Children's Workforce Development Council.

It criticises what it calls the Government's 'standards agenda', and says that initiatives such as SATS tests and the national strategies have led to a focus on numeracy and literacy at the expense of science, arts and the humanities.

Vernon Coaker, schools minister, said, 'We're already putting in place the most fundamental reforms for decades following Sir Jim Rose's primary review – to make the curriculum less prescriptive and free it up for teachers. The Cambridge Review suggests a school starting age of six, but this would be completely counterproductive. We want to make sure children are playing and learning from an early age and to give parents the choice for their child to start school in the September following their fourth birthday. The report is at best woolly and unclear on how schools should be accountable to the

public – we're clear that it would be a retrograde step to return to days when the real achievements of schools were hidden.'

But Mick Brookes, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said, 'This comprehensive study of primary education must be taken seriously by Government, whether in power or in opposition. This report is truly independent, unlike work commissioned and controlled by the DCSF, which largely says what it wants to hear. There are recommendations in this report that could transform the primary ethos and turn pessimism into hope.'

For further information visit www.primaryreview.org.uk.