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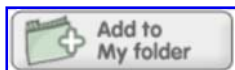
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# Final report of Cambridge Primary Review released

16<sup>th</sup> October 2009

Following a three-year enquiry and 31 interim reports, the Cambridge Primary Review today publishes its final report on the condition and future of primary education.

The report says that, despite being under intense pressure, morale in primary education is good and in general schools are doing a good job. Investment in education has risen since 1997 and many policies have had a positive impact. Primary schools are valued by children and parents, providing stability and positive values in a world of change and uncertainty.

However three main concerns are highlighted in the review – its contributors’ concerns about 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.

Witnesses concerns about children are questioned by the Review – which points to research evidence showing how much young children know, understand and can do, given teaching that challenges and stimulates them, pays attention to their ideas and empowers them. Children, the review says, were its most upbeat witnesses. The report does, however, say that government intervention is appropriate where poverty, disadvantage, risk and discrimination are affecting children’s lives.

The Government’s standards agenda is not seen in a similarly positive light. The educational damage targets, testing, performance tables, national strategies and inspection are perceived to have caused are seen to have provided questionable returns. The report calls for a more rigorous concept of standards, and different approaches to inspection and assessment – although it does still suggest that assessment should be carried out at the end of the primary stage.

Specific recommendations of the Review include:

- **New aims:** Adopt the Review’s proposed 12 aims and 13 principles for primary education.
- **New structures:** Strengthen early years provision; extend foundation stage to age six; replace KS1 and 2 by a single primary phase; examine the feasibility of raising the school starting age to six in line with these changes and international research and practice.
- **Narrow the gaps:** Continue to give priority to narrowing the gap between vulnerable children and the rest, and to reducing England’s long tail of underachievement.
- **Undertake a 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: This definition should inform curriculum, assessment, teaching, inspection and accountability.
- **Tackle unfinished curriculum business:** Put implementation of the Government’s *Rose Review* on hold pending consideration of the Cambridge Review’s more comprehensive analysis of the problems to be fixed and its proposals for a national framework of eight domains of knowledge, skill and enquiry combined with a locally-responsive ‘community curriculum’, all driven by the proposed 12 aims.
- **Reform assessment:** Retain formal assessment at the end of primary school, but stop the 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: their depth of engagement with what is to be taught, quality of classroom interaction and skill in assessing and providing feedback on pupils’ learning.
- **Undertake a full review of primary school staffing** to ensure that every school has access to the expertise that a modern primary education requires, and can deliver both the Review’s broader account of educational entitlement and its more rigorous concept of standards. Extend teaching roles to include specialists and semi-specialists as well as generalist class teachers, especially for older children.
- **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 partnerships:** 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 closures. Achieve a better fit between school design and function, with more specialist and outdoor space. Protect and expand school libraries. ICT and books are not alternatives: books remain fundamental to children’s lives and education.
- **Reverse the tide of centralisation:** Radically re-balance the responsibilities of the Department for Children, Schools and Families, non-departmental public bodies such as the TDA and QCDA, Local Authorities and schools.
- **End the 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 mudslinging 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.

Following launch events in Cambridge and London on 19 October (details [here](#)), 14 regional conferences will be held for professional leaders from schools, teacher training and research. For further details of these conferences visit: [www.teachersfirst.org.uk/cpr/](http://www.teachersfirst.org.uk/cpr/)

The Review drew on more than 4000 published sources plus 28 specially-commissioned surveys, and over a thousand written submissions from organisations and individuals. The final Review is 608 pages long and makes 78 conclusions and 75 recommendations. Under the editorship of the Review's director, Professor Robin Alexander, it has been written by a team of 14 authors supported by 66 research consultants and an advisory committee of 20 members.

*Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review*, 608pp, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, ISBN 978 0415548717.

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