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Primary Pupils Face 'Excessive' Pressure

11:06am UK, Friday 12 October 2007

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Children are facing "excessive" pressure to do well at school and are suffering from deep anxiety as a result.

That is the verdict of a major review of what pupils, parents and teachers think of primary school education.

Researchers at Cambridge University say children are under pressure to conform to the commercial values of the modern world.

They warn there is widespread concern that family life is "breaking down" and the culture of respect disappearing.

The Primary Review uncovers a national mood of anxiety that children are being forced to grow up too soon.

Review director Robin Alexander said: "The unease about the present and pessimism about the future which we uncovered as we travelled round the country and talked to many people both inside and outside education cannot so easily be explained away."

The report, Community Soundings, identified other concerns - among them that life for young children outside school "is increasingly insecure and, in many areas, dangerous".

It found the pressures of 'Sats' tests for 11-year-olds dominated the last two years of primary education and distorted the curriculum.

Children were also fearful of the long-term impact of climate change and pollution, as well as the gaps between rich and poor nations.

But a Department for Children, Schools and Families spokeswoman said: "We are committed to improving the lives of children and young people right across the country and we are making substantial progress.

"The vast majority of children go to better schools, enjoy better health, live in better housing and in more affluent households than they did 10 years ago."

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A spokesman said the Government did not share the view that children are over-tested.

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