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Wise man reprises primary inquiry

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Forty years after Plowden, another team tries to devise the best strategies

The most comprehensive independent review of primary education in England for almost 40 years is being launched today. For the next two years, teachers and other education professionals are invited to contribute to th [More...](#)

It aims to take stock of past initiatives and to investigate the role that primary schools should play in a dramatically changing world.

Its remit will be the most extensive since the 1967 Plowden Report and will culminate in a report making recommendations for future policy and practice, to be published in 2008.

It is funded by a £85,000 grant from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, which is one of the UK's largest independent grant-making bodies.

The research team is based at the University of Cambridge and is led by Professor Robin Alexander, who was one of the so-called "Three Wise Men".

It was their 1992 report that led to the reversal of a post-Plowden relaxation of subject boundaries in primaries and a return to the teaching of individual subjects.

He and a team of more than 60 research consultants will gather evidence in the form of written submissions from everyone who wishes to contribute, whether they are involved in education or not, and will interview national figures, parents, children and teachers. They will also make systematic surveys of official national and

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international data and published research.

Professor Alexander said: "Forty years on from the last major inquiry into primary education and with two decades of government initiatives behind us, it is time to take stock.

"In many quarters optimism about the opportunities created by recent social and educational advances is tempered by deep anxiety about what lies ahead for today's children, and indeed for humanity as a whole."

The review will be overseen by a 20-member advisory committee of educationists and non-educationists, chaired by Dame Gillian Pugh of London university's Institute of Education.

She said: "There has been little national debate about primary education in recent years: the spotlight has been on secondary, post-16 and the early years."

The review will examine 10 themes: the purpose and values of education, teaching, the curriculum and assessment, standards, inclusion, professionals, parents, beyond the school, the structures of education and funding and governance.

These will be put in context by viewing the information from three perspectives - children and childhood, culture and society, and educational systems and practice.

England has more than 17,500 primary schools catering for more than four million children aged between five and 11. They are staffed by about 198,000 qualified teachers and a large and expanding number of support staff. Most schools are local authority maintained but about a quarter have denominational links.

alternative vision, 19 www.primaryreview.org.uk tells participants how to submit their evidence.

Contributions, as Word documents, can be emailed to evidence@primaryreview.org.uk. Hard copies can be posted to Catrin Darsley, administrator to the Primary Review, University of Cambridge Faculty of education, 184 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2PQ. All submissions should include the author's name, address and contact email or phone number

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