

Government rejects Cambridge review

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A proposal to change the age at which children start school to six years old have been rejected by the government.

The recommendation was part of the Cambridge Primary Review of primary school [education](#) published today.

Schools minister Vernon Coaker told GMTV: "For many of those children coming into school, it is of crucial importance they are in that formal but appropriate type learning [environment](#) so they can gather the skills and get the skills they need as they go through life.

"Leaving it to six would leave many of our children, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, it would mean they would start a long way behind others."

But the review was welcomed as a "breath of fresh air" by education professionals union Voice.

Philip Parkin, the union's general secretary said: "This report offers a radical alternative perspective on primary education and will stimulate new ways of thinking and talking about children's learning.

"We are very concerned about children beginning a formal academic education too early in order to satisfy the demands of an inappropriate and overbearing testing and target-led regime.

Children are individuals and vary greatly in their academic development and readiness for formal learning. A later start to formal education remains our preferred option."

The report was written by a team of 14 authors, supported by 66 research consultants and a 20-strong advisory committee, under the editorship of the review's director, Professor Robin Alexander of Cambridge University.

Christine Blower, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers said it was "absolutely extraordinary" that the government had decided to ignore the report.

"Any government worth its salt, particularly in front of an impending general election, would have embraced this immensely rich report as a source of policy ideas," she said.

And Chris Keates, general secretary of the NASUWT, the largest teachers union, said the report had been "hijacked" by people attempting to denigrate of state education.

There is no evidence in the report which could lead to the conclusion that primary education is in crisis, as some commentators appear to be suggesting," he said.

Indeed the report recognises that there has been a massive investment in primary education and that primary teachers have delivered."

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