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Later school start plans rejected

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Formal school learning should begin at the age of six, according to a new review

Schools Minister Vernon Coaker has rejected proposals for children to begin formal education at the age of six.

The proposed change was included in the Cambridge Primary Review.

The authors of the report, the most comprehensive review of primary education in England for 40 years, found children respond better to play-based learning at a young age and said there was no evidence to suggest it would hold them back in later life.

But Mr 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.

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"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."

He added that many of the review's findings were included in an earlier Government-backed review and had already been acted on.

He said: "We're already reducing the emphasis on the SATs test, which is another point they make.

"But as I say, for the reception children coming into school, for the four-year-olds, it is a play-based curriculum, then moving into year one and obviously there is an emphasis on reading and writing."

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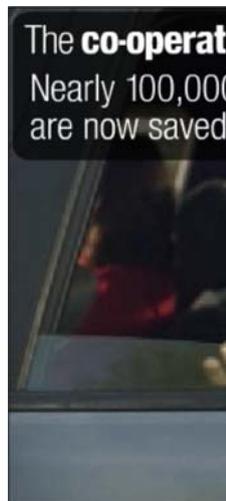
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