



THE CAMBRIDGE PRIMARY REVIEW

The Cambridge Primary Review is a wide-ranging independent enquiry into the condition and future of primary education in England. It is supported from 2006-10 by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and is based at the University of Cambridge. The Review was launched in October 2006 and published its final report three years later, in October 2009. Between October 2007 and May 2008 the Review published as interim reports 28 research surveys and an account of the 2007 regional Community Soundings. In February 2009 it published a two-volume special report on the primary curriculum.

The launch of the Review was preceded by nearly three years of planning and by consultation with government, opposition parties, DfES/DCSF officials, the all-party Commons Education and Skills (now Children, Schools and Families) Committee, public bodies involved in the primary phase of education, the teaching unions and a range of other interested organisations.

The Review was initiated and is directed by Professor Robin Alexander, Fellow of Wolfson College at the University of Cambridge and Professor of Education Emeritus at the University of Warwick. Its Advisory Committee is chaired by Dame Gillian Pugh, Visiting Professor at the University of London Institute of Education, Chair of the National Children's Bureau and formerly Chief Executive of Coram Family.

REMIT

The remit for the Cambridge Primary Review, as agreed between Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the University of Cambridge in 2005-6, is as follows:

- 1. With respect to public provision in England, the Review will seek to identify the purposes which the primary phase of education should serve, the values which it should espouse, the curriculum and learning environment which it should provide, and the conditions which are necessary in order to ensure both that these are of the highest and most consistent quality possible, and that they address the needs of children and society over the coming decades.*
- 2. The Review will pay close regard to national and international evidence from research, inspection and other sources on the character and adequacy of current provision in respect of the above, on the prospects for recent initiatives, and on other available options. It will seek the advice of expert advisers and witnesses, and it will invite submissions and take soundings from a wide range of interested agencies and individuals, both statutory and non-statutory.*
- 3. The Review will publish both interim findings and a final report. The latter will combine evidence, analysis and conclusions together with recommendations for both national policy and the work of schools and other relevant agencies.*

PERSPECTIVES AND THEMES

The Cambridge Primary Review is conceived as a matrix of ten themes and four strands of evidence, overarched by three **perspectives**:

- The lives and needs of children and the condition of childhood today
- The condition of the society and world in which today's children are growing up
- The present condition and future prospects of England's system of primary education.

The **ten themes** addressed by the Review are:

1. Purposes and values

2. Learning and teaching
3. Curriculum and assessment
4. Quality and standards
5. Diversity and inclusion
6. Settings and professionals
7. Parenting, caring and educating
8. Beyond the school
9. Structures and phases
10. Funding and governance.

In respect of these themes, each of which has been elaborated as the sub-themes and contributory questions, the Review has aimed to address two fundamental questions:

- *Evidence*: how well is England's system of primary education doing?
- *Vision*: how can it best meet the needs of children and society over the coming decades?

EVIDENCE

The Cambridge Primary Review has four main strands of evidence:

Submissions. Following the convention in enquiries of this kind, submissions were invited from all who wished to contribute. By March 2009, 1050 submissions had been received. They ranged from brief single-issue expressions of opinion to substantial documents of up to 300 pages covering several or all of the themes and comprising both detailed evidence and recommendations for the future. The majority of the submissions were from national organisations, but a significant number came from individuals. In addition, the Review received several thousand email comments and responses of an informal kind.

Soundings. This strand had two parts. The *Community Soundings* were a series of nine regionally-based one to two day events, each comprising a sequence of meetings with representatives from schools and the communities they serve. The Community Soundings took place between January and March 2007, and entailed 87 witness sessions with groups of pupils, parents, governors, teachers, teaching assistants and heads, and with educational and community representatives from the areas in which the soundings took place. The *National Soundings* were more formal meetings with national organisations both inside and outside education. These helped the team to clarify matters which were particularly problematic or contested, in preparation for the writing of the final report.

Surveys. Several months before the launch of the Review, 28 surveys of published research relating to the Review's ten themes were commissioned, on the basis of competitive bidding and peer review, from 70 academic consultants in leading university departments of education and allied fields. The resulting research reports and their accompanying briefings and media releases were published in cross-thematic groups over several months, starting in autumn 2007. They provoked considerable media, public and political interest, and provided the top UK news story on several occasions.

Searches and policy mapping. With the co-operation of DfES/DCSF, QCA, Ofsted and TDA, the Review tracked recent policy and examined official data bearing on the primary phase. This provided the necessary legal, demographic, financial and statistical background to the Review and an important resource for its consideration of policy options.

The balance of evidence. The four evidential strands sought to balance opinion-seeking with empirical data; non-interactive expressions of opinion with face-to-face discussion; official data with independent research; and material from England with that from other parts of the UK and from international sources. This enquiry, unlike some of its predecessors, looked outwards from primary schools to the wider society, and made full but judicious use of international data and ideas from other countries.

Other meetings. In addition to the formal evidence-gathering procedures, the Review's director and other team members have met representatives of many national and regional bodies for the exchange of information and ideas. By February 2009, 146 such meetings had taken place or were scheduled, in addition to the 94 community and national soundings, making a total of 240 sessions.

REPORTS

The Cambridge Primary Review has published both interim and final reports. The main series of 29 interim reports, which included 28 of the commissioned research surveys and the report on the community soundings, served a formative function, seeking to provoke further debate which then fed back into the Review. The Review has an active and still-expanding website – www.primaryreview.org.uk – on which the interim reports were published, together with a record of their extensive media coverage. Electronic and print versions of the reports and briefings were widely circulated and are still available.

The two special reports on the primary curriculum were published in February 2009. Written as part of the Review's final report, they were brought forward and adapted as contributions to the formal consultation on the interim report of the government's Rose Review of the primary curriculum.

The Cambridge Primary Review final report draws on the various strands of evidence outlined above to address the ten listed themes and attendant questions. It combines findings, analysis, reflection and conclusions, together with recommendations for both policy and practice. A companion volume contains the commissioned surveys of published research, updated in light of the most recent research and policy. Taken together, it is hoped that all this material will both provoke immediate responses from stakeholders and provide a significant empirical and reflective resource for the longer term.

OUTLINE TIMETABLE

Phase 1: **Preparation** (January 2004 – October 2006)

Phase 2: **Implementation**

- Submissions (October 2006 – October 2008)
- Community Soundings (January – March 2007)
- Research Surveys (July 2006 – January 2008)
- Searches (November 2006 – spring 2009)
- National Soundings (January – March 2008)
- Other meetings (October 2006 – April 2009)

Phase 3: **Dissemination**

- Interim reports and briefings (October 2007 – May 2008)
- Special report on the primary curriculum (February 2009)
- Final report (October 2009)
- National and regional dissemination conferences and other events (from autumn 2009)

Phase 4: **Longer term evaluation and follow-up** (from late 2009)

- Programme to be agreed.

FUNDING

The Cambridge Primary Review is undertaken with the generous support of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

PERSONNEL (for full list see website)

Director of the Cambridge Primary Review: Professor Robin Alexander

Chair of the Cambridge Primary Review Advisory Committee: Dame Gillian Pugh

Chair of the Cambridge Primary Review Management Group: Hilary Hodgson, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Director of Communications: Dr Richard Margrave

Dissemination Co-ordinator: Julia Flutter

Administrator: Catrin Darsley

CONTACT

Address: The Cambridge Primary Review, Faculty of Education, 184 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 8PQ, UK.

Phone: 01223 767523

Email: enquiries@primaryreview.org.uk

Website: www.primaryreview.org.uk

REPORTS FROM THE CAMBRIDGE PRIMARY REVIEW

THE INTERIM REPORTS

The 31 interim reports, 28 of them specially-commissioned surveys of published research, were released in nine groups between October 2007 and May 2008, with two further reports published in February 2009. On each occasion, several types of document were issued: (i) the reports in full; (ii) 3-4 page briefings on each report; (iii) 3-4 page overview briefings on each group of reports published together; (iv) a press release. These give readers the choice of accessing the reports at any level from the short summary to the full report, with a fuller summary in between.

All the reports, briefings, overview briefings and press releases may be downloaded from the Cambridge Primary Review website: www.primaryreview.org.uk.

The reports are listed below in order of publication.

12 October 2007 The community soundings

Community Soundings: the Primary Review regional witness sessions, Robin Alexander and Linda Hargreaves, University of Cambridge. ISBN 978-1-906478-00-1.

2 November 2007 How well are we doing? Research on standards, quality and assessment in English primary education

Standards and quality in English primary schools over time: the national evidence (Research Survey 4/1) Peter Tymms and Christine Merrell, University of Durham. ISBN 978-1-906478-01-8.

Standards in English primary education: the international evidence (Research Survey 4/2) Chris Whetton, Graham Ruddock and Liz Twist, National Foundation for Educational Research. ISBN 978-1-906478-02-5.

The quality of learning: assessment alternatives for primary education (Research Survey 3/4) Wynne Harlen, University of Bristol. ISBN 978-1-906478-03-2.

23 November 2007 Children's lives and voices: research on children at home and school

Children's lives outside school and their educational impact (Research Survey 8/1) Berry Mayall, Institute of Education, University of London. ISBN 978-1-906478-05-6.

Parenting, caring and educating. (Research Survey 7/1) Yolande Muschamp, Felicity Wikeley, Tess Ridge and Maria Balarin, University of Bath. ISBN 978-1-906478-06-3.

Primary schools and other agencies (Research Survey 8/2) Ian Barron, Rachel Holmes, Maggie MacLure, Manchester Metropolitan University, and Katherine Runswick-Cole, University of Sheffield. ISBN 978-1-906478-07-0.

Children and Their Primary Schools: pupils' voices (Research Survey 5/3) Carol Robinson, University of Sussex, and Michael Fielding, Institute of Education, University of London. ISBN 978-1-906478-04-9.

14 December 2007 Children in primary schools: research on development, learning, diversity and educational needs

Children's cognitive development and learning (Research Survey 2/1a) Usha Goswami, University of Cambridge, and Peter Bryant, University of Oxford. ISBN 978-1-906478-08-7.

Children's social development, peer interaction and classroom learning (Research Survey 2/1b) Christine Howe and Neil Mercer, University of Cambridge. ISBN 978-1-906478-09-4.

Children in primary education: demography, culture, diversity and inclusion (Research Survey 5/1) Mel Ainscow, Alan Dyson, and Frances Gallannaugh, University of Manchester, and Jean Conteh, University of Leeds. ISBN 978-1-906478-10-0.

Learning needs and difficulties among children of primary school age: definition, identification, provision and issues (Research Survey 5/2) Harry Daniels and Jill Porter, University of Bath. ISBN 978-1-906478-11-7.

18 January 2008 Aims and values in primary education: national and international perspectives

Aims as policy in English primary education (Research Survey 1/1) John White, Institute of Education, University of London. ISBN 978-1-906478-12-4.

Aims and values in primary education: England and other countries (Research Survey 1/2) Maha Shuayb and Sharon O'Donnell, National Foundation for Educational Research. ISBN 978-1-906478-13-1.

Aims for primary education: the changing national context (Research Survey 1/3) Stephen Machin and Sandra McNally, London School of Economics and Political Science. ISBN 978-1-906478-14-8.

Aims for primary education: changing global contexts (Research Survey 1/4) Rita Chawla-Duggan and John Lowe, University of Bath. ISBN 978-1-906478-15-5.

8 February 2008 The structure and content of English primary education: international perspectives

The structure of primary education: England and other countries (Research Survey 9/1) Anna Riggall and Caroline Sharp, National Foundation for Educational Research. ISBN 978-1-906478-17-9.

Curriculum and assessment policy: England and other countries (Research Survey 3/1) Kathy Hall, National University of Ireland, and Kamil Øzerk, University of Oslo. ISBN 978-1-906478-18-6.

Primary curriculum futures (Research Survey 3/3) James Conroy, Moira Hulme and Ian Menter, University of Glasgow. ISBN 978-1-906478-19-3.

29 February 2008 Governance, funding, reform and quality assurance: policy frameworks for English primary education

The governance and administration of English primary education (Research Survey 10/2) Maria Balarin and Hugh Lauder, University of Bath. ISBN 978-1-906478-20-9.

The funding of English primary education (Research Survey 10/1) Philip Noden and Anne West, London School of Economics and Political Science. ISBN 978-1-906478-21-6.

The trajectory and impact of national reform: curriculum and assessment in English primary schools (Research Survey 3/2) Dominic Wyse, University of Cambridge, Elaine McCreery and Harry Torrance, Manchester Metropolitan University. ISBN 978-1-906478-22-3.

Quality assurance in English primary education (Research Survey 4/3) Peter Cunningham and Philip Raymont, University of Cambridge. ISBN 978-1-906478-23-0.

18 April 2008 Primary teachers: training, development, leadership and workforce reform

Primary schools: the professional environment (Research Survey 6/2) Ian Stronach, Andy Pickard and Liz Jones, Manchester Metropolitan University. ISBN 978-1-906478-25-4.

Primary teachers: initial teacher education, continuing professional development and school leadership development (Research Survey 6/3) Olwen McNamara and Rosemary Webb, University of Manchester, and Mark Brundrett, Liverpool John Moores University. ISBN 978-1-906478-26-1.

Primary workforce management and reform (Research Survey 6/4) Hilary Burgess, Open University. ISBN 978-1-906478-27-8.

16 May 2008 Learning and teaching in primary schools: processes and contexts

Learning and teaching in primary schools: insights from TLRP (Research Survey 2/4) Mary James and Andrew Pollard, Institute of Education, University of London. ISBN 978-1-906478-30-8.

Classes, groups and transitions: structures for learning and teaching (Research Survey 9/2) Peter Blatchford, Susan Hallam and Judith Ireson, Institute of Education, University of London, Peter Kutnick, King's College, University of London, with Andrea Creech, Institute of Education, University of London. ISBN 978-1-906478-29-2.

Primary schools: the built environment (Research Survey 6/1) Karl Wall, Julie Dockrell and Nick Peacey, Institute of Education, University of London. ISBN 978-1-906478-24-7.

20 February 2009 The primary curriculum: an alternative vision

Towards a New Primary Curriculum: a report from the Cambridge Primary Review. Part 1: Past and Present, by Robin Alexander and Julia Flutter, University of Cambridge. ISBN 978-1-906478-31-5.

Towards a New Primary Curriculum: a report from the Cambridge Primary Review. Part 2: The Future, by Robin Alexander, University of Cambridge. ISBN 978-1-906478-32-2.

THE FINAL REPORT

The final report of the Cambridge Primary Review was published on 16 October 2009.

THE REPORT. ***Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review***, 608 pp, Routledge, October 2009. ISBN 978-0-415-54871-7 (pb), 978-0-415-54870-0 (hb). Editor: Robin Alexander. Authorial team: Robin Alexander, Michael Armstrong, Julia Flutter, Linda Hargreaves, Wynne Harlen, David Harrison, Elizabeth-Hartley-Brewer, Ruth Kershner, John MacBeath, Berry Mayall, Stephanie Northen, Gillian Pugh, Colin Richards and David Utting. Order a copy at <http://www.routledge.com/9780415548717>.

COMPANION RESEARCH VOLUME. ***The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys***, 850 pp, Routledge, October 2009. ISBN 978-0-415-54869-4 (hb only). Editors: Robin Alexander, with Christine Doddington, John Gray, Linda Hargreaves and Ruth Kershner. 66 contributing authors. Order a copy at <http://www.routledge.com/9780415548717>.

BOOKLET. ***Introducing the Cambridge Primary Review***, 42pp, October 2009, ISBN 978-1-906478-9. Edited by Diane Hofkins and Stephanie Northen. Copies have been widely circulated throughout the UK, including to all schools, local authorities and teacher training providers. They may also be downloaded at www.primaryreview.org.uk.

BRIEFING. ***The final report: Cambridge Primary Review briefing***, 4 pp, October 2009. Download at www.primaryreview.org.uk.