In mid-October the Cambridge review of primary education in England, headed by Robin Alexander, was published to much publicity. The media gave much attention to the proposal not to start formal teaching before the age of 6, so in this, as well as previous issues of Primary Science, we have emphasised the importance of play as a way to promote enquiry.

Other recommendations that could benefit science teaching are the introduction of specialist teaching into primary schools, the ending of differential funding, the extension of initial postgraduate training to two years, and the encouragement of professional partnerships. The report also wants the implementation of the earlier Rose review to be put on hold, and clearly hopes to reverse the ‘tide of centralisation’, all of which is likely to please teachers and trainers. But in an election year, is the Government likely to take notice?

Children, their world, their education (The Cambridge Primary Review) is published by Routledge. A summary can be found at www.primaryreview.org.uk

Editors’ note: If you have any comments you would like to add on the primary curriculum, either the Cambridge review or the Rose review, then we would be glad to hear from you.

New Board members

The Primary Science Editorial Board is delighted to welcome two new members. Claire Tocher recently wrote for us in issue 109 and has a background in television, working for the BBC on science documentaries. She is our first one-year NQT board member, now teaching at Woolacombe School in Devon. Kate Blacklock is an independent primary science consultant who also works as a primary science development leader at the SLC North West. She is co-author of the Discovery Dog resources and, while based in the North West, says ‘I can be found all over the country!’

Kid K’NEX life cycles

Barbara Higginbotham reports how Kid K’NEX life cycles can support learning

Early years teachers have reviewed this resource positively, but I wanted to explore further and establish whether Kid K’NEX Life Cycles would foster an interest in science amongst the very young.

To find out, I joined a group of eight children in the reception class of a London school, allowing them to just ‘dive in’ and play with the resource. I noticed that they began building straight away but did not look at any of the coloured cards that would help them to construct an animal. I decided to bring these cards to their attention and began with the photograph of a frog, asking if they knew what this was. I was met with blank looks, until one boy answered quietly, ‘rivet rivet’. I moved on to a picture of a caterpillar, and this they all recognised. I turned to the card showing the life cycle of a caterpillar and asked if they knew what a caterpillar would grow into? They obviously knew the story of The very hungry caterpillar but I wanted to explore further and establish whether Kid K’NEX life cycles could support learning and establish whether Kid K’NEX life cycles would foster an interest in science amongst the very young.

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Involving the children in science activities provides the construction sets as something they could ‘play’ with and make into a ‘real’ animal, helped focus the discussion.

For more information email: Barbara.Higginbotham@data-harvest.co.uk