

Children's University

What is Children's University™?

The Children's University™ (CU) aims to promote exciting learning opportunities and experiences outside normal school hours for children aged 7 to 14 (and 5 and 6 year olds with their families). At the heart of its work is the ambition to raise aspirations, boost achievement and foster a love of learning, so that young people can make the most of their abilities and interests.

What is a Learning Destination?

Learning Destinations are places and organisations to which children can 'travel' with their *Passport to Learning*. They provide high quality learning activities and experiences with a 'wow' factor and have passed the Children's University's™ own quality assurance process (*Planning for Learning*). As well as being an after-school or holiday activity organised by the school, a *Learning Destination* can range from a museum to a farm or from an airport to a school. There are *Learning Destinations* across the country. You can find out more about them by visiting www.childrensuniversity.co.uk

Recognising and rewarding participation

Children's University™ students use *Passports to Learning* in which they record the number of hours of completed CU validated learning activities. Children are encouraged to progress through the national certification scheme, based on the number of hours of attendance throughout their involvement with the Children's University™.

Why become involved with Learning Destinations?

Children's University™ can support schools to:

- Develop impact evidence around the benefits of young people taking part in co-curricular opportunities – both on and off school site;
- Increase parental involvement;
- Use integrated IT systems to monitor hours and participation in co-curricular opportunities both on and off school site;
- Demonstrate and justify Pupil Premium or other budget spend;

- Look at School Improvement Plans and utilise learning outside of the classroom to improve attainment and achievement;
- Improve the confidence, independence and readiness to learning of the young people.

A.3 The Impact of Children's University

The evaluation undertaken by Professor John Macbeath from the University of Cambridge in 2010 identified the following findings:

1. Being in the Children's University significantly improves school attendance
2. Achievement is significantly better at Key Stages 1 to 3 for children who participate in Children's University compared with non-attenders
3. The further children engage with Children's University, the better their attendance and achievement
4. Children's University provides an environment for self-driven, confident and collegial learning
5. Children's University provides a safe haven and models positive relationships.
6. Pupils and teachers testify to life changing experiences
7. 'Opportunity costs' are high for children in disadvantaged areas who do not attend Children's University
8. Certificates, credits, Passports To Learning and graduations are valued incentives and rewards
9. University settings help to inspire and raise aspirations for children, and their parents
10. Children's University has helped to "*make learning a reality beyond academic studies.*"

The full evaluation report can be found
at www.childrensuniversity.co.uk/evaluation2010

A.4 Children's University and Ofsted

Children's University learning, self-evaluation and its contribution to schools' external accountability

"Over 85% of learning occurs outside the school...habitats outside the classroom – out there in the wild – are where the best learning might take place"

(Dr. James Bradburne, Director General of the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, 2009)

"The prize is worth having: a good or better education for all our young people, with no excuses accepted"

(Sir Michael Wilshaw HMCI, 2012)

These two statements encapsulate both the school leader's moral purpose and fundamental dilemma. How to reconcile the two?

Children's University (CU) learning is a powerful vehicle for schools to harness the benefits of out-of-school learning as different from, but ideally complementary to, learning in school.

As successive revisions to the Ofsted framework refine its focus, it is important to recognise that although the benefits of CU learning extend far beyond traditional accountability frameworks, they remain an important benchmark for schools.

All five of the key judgements in the most recent framework can be related closely to CU provision:

1. The **achievement** of pupils
2. The quality of **teaching**
3. The **behaviour and safety** of pupils
4. The quality of **leadership and management** of the school

These judgements inform the summative judgement of the school's **overall effectiveness**, to which CU provision also makes a significant contribution. The overall effectiveness judgement considers how well schools provide opportunities for children to:

- Overcome barriers to their learning;
- reflect on their experiences, use imagination, creativity, develop curiosity;

- take part in activities requiring social skills;
- respond positively to a range of artistic, sporting and cultural activities;
- develop the skills and attitudes to enable them to participate fully in democratic, modern Britain;
- understand and appreciate the range of different cultures within school and further afield;

More information can be found via the following links:

- [Information for schools and academies](#)
- [Child Passport to Learning](#)
- [CU & Ofsted](#)
- [CU & Pupil Premium](#)