

## Children's University

Children's University (CU) aims to improve the aspirations and attainment of pupils aged 5 to 14 by providing learning activities beyond the normal school day, such as after-school clubs, visits to universities and museums, and 'social action' opportunities such as volunteering in the community. In this project, children in Years 5 and 6 volunteered to take part and selected the activities they wished to attend. Participation was rewarded through credits, certificates and a 'graduation' event. The intervention evaluated here is one of two 'youth social action' projects jointly funded by the Education Endowment Foundation and the U.K. Cabinet Office.

Children's University		
Independent Evaluator		
Durham University		
Pupils	Schools	Grant
2,603	68	£559,862
Themes		
  		

subject

**Cross curriculum**

key stage

**Key Stage 2**

## EEF Summary

EEF funded this project to test whether extra-curricular activities, including social action, can help to improve pupil attainment and other attitudes and skills, such as motivation, confidence and team-working. There is a growing appetite to understand whether activities like these can promote improved outcomes, and there is also evidence that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are currently less likely to participate in these types of activities.

This trial found positive impacts on Key Stage 2 maths and reading results equivalent to about 2 months' additional progress. Small improvements were also seen for a range of non-cognitive outcomes, such as teamwork, social responsibility, and aspirations. These results have moderate security, and further evaluation would be needed before we can be confident that the results apply to other schools, but they provide initial evidence that well-supported enrichment activities can improve children's academic and non-cognitive outcomes.

Previous research suggests that the quality of activities, explicit links to learning, and recognition for children's achievements are important components of extra-curricular activities that aim to improve educational outcomes. The process evaluation provides some evidence that these factors contributed to the success of this intervention. It also found that pressures to meet performance targets, and limited time, were barriers to taking part for some schools.

## Research Results

Outcome/Group	<u>Impact</u> - the size of the difference between Children's University pupils and other pupils	<u>Security</u> - how confident are we in this result?
KS2 reading	+2 Months' Progress 	
KS2 maths	+2 Months' Progress 	
'Teamwork'	+0.04 (Effect size) 	
'Social responsibility'	+0.08 (Effect size) 	
EverFSM KS2 reading	0 Months' Progress	N/A
EverFSM KS2 maths	+1 Months' Progress	N/A
EverFSM 'Teamwork'	+0.17 (Effect size)	N/A
EverFSM 'Social responsibility'	+0.10 (Effect size)	N/A

### Were the schools in the trial similar to my school?

There were 68 schools in the trial, located in Lancashire, Middlesbrough, Blackpool, Blackburn and Darwen. Fifty-nine of the 68 were Good or Outstanding schools. 17% of the pupils in the intervention schools were eligible for FSM.

### Could I implement this in my school?

The programme is available to buy from the charity Children's University. Schools appoint a CU Coordinator who attends an initial induction (around 2 hours at the start of the year), and light-touch support during the year as necessary. The Coordinator spends around 1 hour per week organising activities and supporting teachers to run after-school clubs. CU presents briefly at an inset day or staff meeting to introduce the programme and encourage support. CU also provides classroom demonstrations for teachers and pupils on how to use the online 'Passport for Learning' to log their activities.

Classroom teachers are expected to support after-school clubs (eg, an hour per week). Often schools have clubs running anyway, so this is not necessarily additional time. Teachers are also expected to allow 1-2 hours per term of class time for children to log their activities.

Delivered by  
**Teachers**

Participant group  
**Individuals**

Intervention length  
**2 Years**

## How much will it cost?

Overall, the total additional cost of participation for schools is around £45 per pupil per year. In addition to this, schools had to appoint a CU Coordinator who attended an initial induction, and spent 1 or 2 hours per week organising activities and supporting teachers to run after-school clubs. Class teachers spent time running after-school clubs. Costs vary according to the kind of activities schools choose, and resources already available.

 Cost per pupil  
**£45**

 No. of Teachers/TAs  
**Y5/6 class teachers**

 Training time per staff member  
**Variable**

Schools 68	Pupils 2,603	Key Stage Key Stage 2
Start date February 2014	End date December 2017	Type of trial Effectiveness Trial

## Evaluation Conclusions

1. Children in the CU schools made 2 additional months' progress in reading and maths compared to children in the other schools. The finding for maths has moderate security, and the finding for reading has low to moderate security
2. Children in CU schools made small gains in 'teamwork' and 'social responsibility' compared to children in the other schools. The finding for social responsibility has moderate security and the finding for teamwork has low to moderate security.
3. Children ever eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) made 1 additional month's progress in maths, no additional progress in reading, and small gains in 'teamwork' and 'social responsibility' compared to ever FSM children in the other schools. The smaller number of ever FSM pupils means these results are less secure than the results for all pupils.
4. Compared to pupils in the control group, those in the treatment group were more likely to select professional occupations as their future aspiration, and to report higher levels of communication, empathy, self-confidence, resilience, and happiness, after the intervention.
5. The intervention was feasible to run with support from school leaders. However, 7 schools decided not to implement the intervention despite receiving the training because of pressures to meet performance targets, and limited time.