

Last reviewed: November 2019

Intervention website: www.childrensuniversity.co.uk

GUIDEBOOK INTERVENTION INFORMATION SHEET

Children's University

Please note that in the 'Intervention Summary' table below 'child age', 'level of need', and 'race and ethnicities information is **as evaluated in studies**. Information in other fields describes the intervention as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.

Intervention summary	
Description	Children's University is a universal school-based intervention for children between 5 and 14 years old. It is delivered to groups of children by a lead teacher who coordinates the intervention. The aim is for children to complete at least 30 hours of activity per year.
Evidence rating	2
Cost rating	1
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhancing school achievement & employment<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improved arithmetic- Improved speech, language and communication.
Child age (population characteristic)	9 to 12 years old
Level of need (population characteristic)	Universal

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Intervention summary	
Race and ethnicities (population characteristic)	Not reported
Type (model characteristic)	Group
Setting (model characteristic)	Primary school
Workforce (model characteristic)	The practitioner that coordinates the intervention can be a Newly Qualified Teacher, or a senior member of staff supported by teaching assistants
UK available?	Yes
UK tested?	Yes

Model description

Children's University (CU) is a universal school-based intervention for children aged 5 to 14 years old. It is delivered both in and outside of school and aims to improve children's aspirations, attainment, and skills by offering learning activities beyond the normal school day. CU works with learning providers such as museums, theatres, and universities to offer at least 30 hours of activities per year. Children select from pre-validated activities, including after-school clubs, community visits, and self-led tasks at home or online. Participation in activities is rewarded through credits, certificates, and stamps in a 'Passport to Learning,' followed by a graduation ceremony attended by parents.

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Target population

Age of child	5 to 14 years old
Target population	Children's University is a universal intervention for all children in primary school, aged between 5 and 14 years old.

Please note that the information in this section on target population is as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.



Theory of change

Why		Who	How	What		
Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Intervention	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
A lack of self-confidence and resilience can negatively affect children's aspirations and attainment.	Extra-curricular learning and social action activities can increase positive identification with school, build self-confidence and resilience, and contribute to learning specific subjects.	All children in primary school, aged between 5 and 14 years old.	Children engage in learning and social action extra-curricular activities, including after-school clubs, visits to museums and community centres, and self-led activities at home and online.	Increased academic achievement.	Improved child confidence, self-belief, and essential skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved aspirations • Improved future life chances.



Implementation requirements

Who is eligible?	Children's University is a universal intervention for all children aged between 5 and 14 years old.
How is it delivered?	The aim of Children's University is to deliver at least 30 hours of activity per year. The intervention is delivered to pupils both in and out of school by a range of practitioners including school staff, and staff facilitating visits to museums and community centres. Some activities are self-led at home or online.
What happens during the intervention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children signed up to Children's University select the activities they wish to attend, with the target of completing at least 30 hours of activity per year • The activities are all pre-validated and recognised by Children's University as being of a certain quality and containing elements of structured learning • Some examples of Children's University activities are after-school clubs, visits to museums and community centres, and activities that are self-led at home or online • Children are issued with a 'Passport to Learning' and collect stamps for participation in activities • Children's achievements are typically celebrated at an end-of-term graduation ceremony.
Who can deliver it?	The practitioner who delivers this intervention is a teacher or senior member of staff supported by teaching assistants.
What are the training requirements?	There are no training requirements. However, typically practitioners will spend anything from a couple of hours to a full day with their local Children's University Manager to help coordinate the intervention.
How are practitioners supervised?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners are supported by their local Children's University Manager. • Children's University Managers work within the education sector and are employed by local organisations. They are coordinated by Children's University Trust. • The local Children's University Manager generally validates local public activities, organises graduation ceremonies, and supports school staff.
What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?	<p>Intervention fidelity is maintained through the following processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local Children's University Manager validates public activities to confirm they meet certain standards.
Is there a licensing requirement?	Yes



Implementation requirements (Cont.)

*Contact details	<p>Organisation: Children's University</p> <p>Email address: contactus@childrensuniversity.co.uk</p> <p>Website: www.childrensuniversity.co.uk</p> <p>*Please note that this information may not be up to date. In this case, please visit the listed intervention website for up to date contact details.</p>
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Evidence summary

Children's University's most rigorous evidence comes from a cluster randomised controlled trial which was conducted in the UK. It has preliminary evidence of improving a child outcome, but we cannot be confident that the intervention caused the improvement.

This study identified statistically significant improvements in children's maths and reading achievement.

Search and review

	Number of studies
Identified in search	6
Studies reviewed	1
Meeting the L2 threshold	1
Meeting the L3 threshold	0
Contributing to the L4 threshold	0
Ineligible	5



Individual study summary: Study 1

Study 1	
Study design	Cluster RCT
Country	United Kingdom
Sample characteristics	1,258 children in years 5 and 6 of school from 68 primary schools, aged between 9 and 12 years old.
Race, ethnicities, and nationalities	Not reported
Population risk factors	The study targeted schools in disadvantaged areas of northern England, where school attainment levels were generally below the national average. Some children were from disadvantaged backgrounds, with 16.5% being eligible for Free School Meals.
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline • Two years post-intervention.
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maths achievement (Administrative data) • Reading achievement (Administrative data).
Other outcomes	None
Study Rating	2
Citations	<p>Study 1a: Gorard, S., Siddiqui, N., See, B. H., Smith, E. & White, P. (2017) <i>Children's University: Evaluation report and executive summary</i>. Education Endowment Foundation.</p> <p>Study 1b: Siddiqui, N., Gorard, S. & See, B. H. (2019) Can learning beyond the classroom impact on social responsibility and academic attainment? An evaluation of the Children's University youth social action programme. <i>Studies in Educational Evaluation</i>. 61, 74–82.</p>



Brief summary

Population characteristics

The study involved 1,258 pupils in years five and six (aged 9 to 11) from 68 primary schools in northern England. Approximately 16.5% of participants were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).

Study design

This study was a cluster randomised controlled trial. Sixty-eight primary schools were randomly allocated to either the Children's University intervention (36 schools) or to a wait-list control and continued with business as usual (32 schools).

Measurement

Academic outcomes (reading and maths attainment) were measured using KS2 results from the National Pupil Database at two years post-intervention.

Study retention

Data was collected for more than 90% of the sample (e.g. 98% of the intervention and 98% of the control group for mathematic scores, 97% of the intervention and 98% of the control group for reading scores).

Results

Data-analytic strategy

This study did not conduct significance tests, as the authors stated they were inappropriate and potentially misleading in this context. Instead, the analysis relied on effect sizes to assess differences between the intervention and control groups. To address baseline imbalances, progress scores were calculated by comparing standardised z-scores from Key Stage 1 (KS1) to Key Stage 2 (KS2). The robustness of the results was tested using the Number Needed to Disturb (NNTD) method. An intention-to-treat (ITT) design was also used.

Findings

Children in schools that received the Children's University intervention made small but significant gains in reading and maths (2 additional months' progress) compared to the wait-list control group pupils.

Limitations

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by methodological issues pertaining to non-equivalent groups, and the treatment condition not being modelled at the level of assignment, hence why a higher rating is not achieved.



Study 1: Outcomes table

Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Child outcomes					
Maths attainment	National pupil database – Key Stage 2 (KS2) maths score (administrative data)	d=0.15	N/A	1,231	Two years post-intervention
Reading attainment	National pupil database – Key Stage 2 (KS2) reading score (administrative data)	d=0.12	N/A	1,224	Two years post-intervention

Other studies

The following studies were identified for this intervention but did not count towards the intervention's overall evidence rating. An intervention receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies:

Hamshaw, K. (2017) *Sheffield Children's University. How does it make a difference? Evidencing the impact of out of school learning accredited and celebrated by Children's University in Sheffield*. Sheffield Children's University.

Rose, P. & Rose, C. (2018) *Black Country Children's University evaluation report*. Tiller Research Ltd.

MacBeath, J. & Waterhouse, J. (2008) *Evaluation of the Children's University: First report*. University of Cambridge.

MacBeath, J. (2011) *Evaluation of the Children's University 2010*. University of Cambridge.

MacBeath, J. (2013) *Evaluating provision, progress and quality of learning in the Children's University*. University of Cambridge.

O'Donnell, H. (2017) *UFA young researchers and evaluators impact report*. Children's University

Ooi, C. S. & Shelley, B. (2018) *Tourism, cultural capital and the transformational power of education: Lessons from the Children's University Tasmania*. Conference contribution.



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Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to Foundations' terms of reference (or the Early Intervention Foundation's terms of reference), and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the intervention provider.