Children’s University (re-grant)

Children’s University aims to improve the aspirations and attainment of pupils by encouraging participation in learning activities beyond the normal school day.

Children’s University centres support schools to provide a range of learning opportunities, such as after-school clubs, projects and enrichment activities, and visits to destinations such as libraries, sports clubs, historic centres, museums, or anywhere that offers structured learning activities for children. Pupils use a ‘Passport to Learning’ to record activities and hours, and these are rewarded by the collection of credits, certificates and graduations.

Why are we funding it?

Children’s University has been tested through a previous EEF trial. 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 had moderate security and provide initial evidence that well-supported enrichment activities can improve children’s academic and non-cognitive outcomes. Children’s University is listed as an EEF promising project.

This new effectiveness trial will involve a larger number of schools and add to the previous evidence to enable us to understand if Children’s University is effective in raising attainment and non-cognitive outcomes in other schools.

How are we evaluating it?

The programme will be evaluated by a team from the National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER) using a randomised controlled trial.

The proposal is to recruit 150 primary schools which will be randomised to either be in the intervention group or the control group. As in the first trial, the main analysis will focus on a group of pupils that reported in an initial survey that they would like to take part in Children’s University, prior to randomisation. These ‘volunteer’ pupils will form the main comparison group.

The intervention will last for 2 years, as in the first trial, the cohort receiving Children’s University for 2 years made more progress than those who received it for one year. The primary outcomes will be attainment of Y5 children after 2 years of Children’s University in reading and maths, using KS2 SATs data. Secondary measures will capture self-reported non-cognitive outcomes including aspirations, motivation, confidence and skill development. The evaluation will also include an implementation and process evaluation.

When will the evaluation report be due?

The evaluation report will be published in Spring 2023.