

SPECIAL REPORT

by Shelley Mouldon



For more special reports, pictures and videos go to www.firstnews.co.uk/discover

Children's Universities

THERE are now 62 local Children's Universities in England and Scotland, and 20 local Children's Universities in Wales – but what are they?

What is the Children's University?

The Children's University (CU) is a national organisation offering children aged seven to 14 a variety of innovative learning activities outside of school hours. This can range from after-school clubs to museum visits and summer holiday activities.



CU students trying cookery in Doncaster

The CU is completely voluntary, so it's up to you if you want to go, and it goes with the work done in schools, offering lots of different subjects and activities for pupils to choose from.

Local CUs, like the national Children's University, have their own Chancellors. The national Chancellor is the children's author Michael Morpurgo.



Michael Morpurgo, national Children's University Chancellor and children's author

How did it start?

The national Children's University began in 2007 and its head office is in Manchester.

The CU idea is to provide children in inner cities, as well as rural areas, who feel they don't get enough of a chance to test their talents, a chance to find out what they're good at and what they are passionate about – and it can be anything from Japanese to ceramics!

It's not about grades

The activities that you can take part in are validated by the Children's University as what they call Learning Destinations. By using the special CU passport pupils are in charge of their own learning.

Children's University pupils are encouraged to progress through the national certification scheme, based on



Graduation celebrations at Norfolk Children's University

their number of hours of attendance throughout their involvement with the CU.

Bronze, silver and gold certificates are awarded at CU Undergraduate, CU Postgraduate and CU Doctorate levels, rewarding participation in CU learning from 30 to 1,000 hours. Honorary certificates are also awarded for outstanding achievement and commitment.



A CU graduate from West London Academy Children's University with her certificate for a national Bronze Award



Graduation celebrations at Norfolk Children's University

Graduation ceremonies

Just like graduations at grown-up universities, award ceremonies are held where pupils can celebrate their achievements at their CU. CU graduates dress up in caps and gowns and are awarded their certificates.

The Children's University feels these ceremonies are really important because they help bring pride and a feeling that learning and its achievements are good things to be part of.

Can I go to a Children's University?

● Check out www.childrensuniversity.co.uk to see where your local CU is. If there isn't one, speak to your school about creating a Children's University in your area!



CHECK IT OUT

For more information visit www.childrensuniversity.co.uk