



CU & Ofsted

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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.

1. Achievement of pupils

Inspectors must use a range of measures to develop an initial picture of the school's academic performance. Children taking part in CU activities often form a "sizeable group" (i.e. 20% or more of the cohort) where inspectors could see evidence of "accelerated achievement or sustained progress" indicating that the activities have had a positive impact. Inspectors are particularly concerned to see evidence of how successfully schools are narrowing the gaps between the performance of different groups within the school, compared with pupils in England.

The results of the *Evaluation of the Children's University 2010*¹ by Professor John MacBeath of the University of Cambridge found that:

"Achievement is significantly better at key stages 1-3 for children who participate in Children's University learning, compared with non participants."

And that Children's University has helped to

"Make learning a reality beyond academic studies."

This research was carried out by the Leadership for Learning team at the University of Cambridge, with support from the Fischer Family Trust. The findings are based on a cohort of 3,000 children from 16 local CU centres and include attitude surveys and interviews. For the 2012 evaluation, the sample will be substantially increased.

This national evidence can be supported through the analysis of CU activity in an individual school. The newly introduced E-passport is designed to work alongside an individual school's existing data management systems. By using individual pupil's unique numbers or UPNs as their CU reference numbers schools can easily track the impact that CU activity is having against a similar group of non-CU children.

Reports generated through the E-passport can be used to contribute to the school's overall analysis of the performance of identified groups. These reports may also inform the school's decisions about allocation of resources generated by the Pupil Premium for example. Staff can easily compare identified groups such as able children, those receiving Free School Meals/Pupil Premium or those with Special Educational Needs and see the impact of their participation in extended provision in comparison with other groups of pupils.

2. Quality of teaching

"The aim of teaching is not to produce learning but to produce the conditions for learning; this is the focal point, the quality of learning" (Loris Malaguzzi)

"The most important role of teaching is to promote learning so as to raise pupils' achievement" (Ofsted Evaluation schedule, 2012)

Teaching comprises activities within and outside the curriculum and this judgement is made on more than just the teaching grades given in lesson observations. Lessons are clearly a key driver for this judgement, but as part of their self evaluation, schools should articulate how extra curricula provision supports classroom learning. In order for the quality of teaching to be judged outstanding: *"teachers and other adults generate high levels of engagement and commitment to learning across the whole school"* (Ofsted evaluation schedule 2012)

The results of the Evaluation of the Children's University 2010 found that:

"Certificates, credits, Passports to Learning and graduations are valued incentives and rewards."

¹ *Evaluation of the Children's University 2010*, Professor John MacBeath, University of Cambridge (ISBN 978-0-9561319-5-9)

All Children's University learning is validated using the processes outlined in *Planning for Learning*², the CU Trust's quality assurance framework. Typically, the validation process will take place between the *Learning Destination* (learning provider) and local CU representation as part of an exercise in collaboration to enhance the quality of learning.

3. Behaviour and safety

As part of the judgement on behaviour and safety, inspectors evaluate pupils' attitudes to learning and pupils' attendance and punctuality. Inspectors are looking for evidence of pupils' engagement, collaboration and co-operation in and out of lessons. CU activity can make a significant contribution to improving pupils' behaviour to support learning and there is strong evidence to suggest that learning skills and attitudes fostered through CU learning are easily transferable to the classroom. Inspectors will want to explore attitudes to learning with small groups of pupils, and may look at a small sample of case studies of the experience of particular individuals and groups which could provide further opportunities to explore the impact of the CU.

The results of the Evaluation of the Children's University 2010 found that:

"Being in the Children's University significantly improves school attendance and the further children engage with the CU, the better their attendance and achievement."

"Children's University learning provides an environment for self-driven, confident and collegial learning, and models positive relationships."

"Children's University provides a safe haven and models positive relationships."

Through using the E-passport schools can easily track the impact of involvement with CU activities, and compare the changes to patterns of attendance and engagement with learning of groups of CU and non CU participants. The E-passport can also reinforce pupils' understanding of the safe use of technology to promote learning and explore new opportunities whilst ensuring that others learn and thrive in an atmosphere of respect and dignity.

4. Leadership and management

As part of the judgement on the quality of leadership and management, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers demonstrate an ambitious vision for the school ... provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils ... engage with parents and carers in supporting pupils' achievement.

Inspectors are asked to report on any significant differences between the judgement on leadership and management and the quality of curriculum provision. Inspectors also look closely at how schools have responded to issues raised in the previous inspection. Where it is clearly evidenced in school improvement planning, the development of CU activity can provide powerful evidence of how the school is harnessing the resources of the local community to improve learning. In the final inspection report, inspectors must report on how well the school meets the spiritual, moral social and cultural needs of its pupils, to which CU learning can make an important contribution.

² *Planning for Learning – A Framework for Validating Learning* by John MacBeath, University of Cambridge, and Ger Graus, Children's University, 2011 (ISBN 978-0-9561319-0-4)

Ofsted judge that a school with outstanding leadership and management has a curriculum which provides highly positive, memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high quality learning ... It has a very positive impact on all pupils' behaviour and safety and contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers, to the very obvious benefit of pupils, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult.

The results of the Evaluation of the Children's University 2010 found that:

"Opportunity costs" are high for children in disadvantaged areas who do not participate in Children's University."

"Pupils and teachers testify to life changing experiences."

An analysis of CU learning activity at school level can give evidence of e.g. pupils' views of memorable CU learning experiences, links between in school learning and CU learning outside school hours, parents' views on the impact of CU. The *Passport To Learning* and E-passport can form the basis of this evidence.

A key feature of the E-passport is the provision of a facility for children to rate each activity out of five and have the option of adding a comment about it. These comments provide schools with instant feedback about the quality of their CU validated learning activities and are relevant to children keen to use social networking sites. The comments and ratings, along with a summary of the number of hours spent on particular activities, are also potentially useful to external providers of learning opportunities.

5. Overall effectiveness

In reaching a summative judgement on the overall effectiveness of the school, inspectors must consider the evidence gathered in support of the four key judgements. In addition, inspectors must consider how well the school promotes all pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by providing positive experiences through planned and coherent opportunities in the curriculum and through interactions with teachers, other adults and the local community. In particular they are looking for evidence of how pupils:

- Overcome barriers to their learning.
- Reflect on their experiences, use imagination, creativity, develop curiosity ...
- Take part in activities requiring social skills.
- Develop an appreciation of theatre, music, art and literature.
- Respond positively to a range of artistic, sporting and cultural activities.
- Gain a well-informed understanding of the options and challenges facing them as they move through the school and on to the next stage of their education and training.
- 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 as an essential element of their preparation for life.

To be judged outstanding for overall effectiveness, a school should be able to demonstrate:

“thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral social and cultural development, which enables them to thrive in a supportive, highly cohesive learning community” (The school inspection handbook, June 2012)

The results of the Evaluation of the Children’s University 2010 found that:

“Children’s University learning provides an environment for self-driven, confident and collegial learning, and models positive relationships.”

“University settings help to inspire and raise aspirations for children and their parents”

“Children’s University has helped to “make learning a reality beyond academic studies.”

“Pupils and teachers testify to life changing experiences.”

At school level, schools can show how CU learning offers opportunities for children to develop skills in these areas e.g. through case stories, summary of take up of learning activities ... The *Passport To Learning* and E-passport can both form the basis of this evidence.

In addition to the *Passport to Learning*, CU is currently piloting a *Passport to Volunteering* for anyone aged 15 or over. Children’s University volunteers-to-be are recruited and trained locally to the CU Trust’s framework *Planning for Volunteering*³.

In any external evaluation a good motto is: show that you understand what the evaluation criteria are ... and prove that your provision/processes are evidence that you do it in practice.

Over the coming months we will be adding more case stories to illustrate how schools have presented evidence of the impact of Children’s University learning in support of their own self-evaluation and external accountability.



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³ *‘Planning for Volunteering – Guide to Children’s University Volunteering’ by Ger Graus and Lynne Upton, Children’s University and John MacBeath, University of Cambridge, 2011 (978-0-9561319-6-6)*