



**CAP THAT:** Above, Aleisha Robinson, aged seven, in her gown; right, youngsters from Academy 360 with Prof John Kilcoyne.



# Hats off to pupils

CHILDREN as young as five have been celebrating their efforts to go the extra mile at a University of Sunderland awards ceremony.

Nearly 80 students from Academy 360, in Sunderland, received gold, silver and bronze awards for their achievements at the university's Cityspace building.

The ceremony showcased Sunderland's Children's University, which is a joint initiative between the university and the Pennywell school.

Academy 360 students, aged from five to 16, have been participating in sports such as curling, netball and rugby, as well as dance and science activities.

**By SUE KIRBY**  
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The awards recognise extra-curricular activities, and certificates were given depending on how many hours they completed.

The Children's University aims to raise aspirations, and ease the transition into higher education.

Katharine Reed, student recruitment co-ordinator and event organiser, said: "It can make all the difference in raising aspirations and show what is available for children on their doorstep."

"We hope this could be the first visit on campus for the students and inspire them to return and

study at the university in years to come."

Aleisha Robinson, aged seven, was the only student to win the gold award with a distinction, and got to wear a cap and gown, after she completed 162 hours of out-of-hours activities in karate, dancing and performing magic.

Aleisha said: "I loved it, it was great. I want to keep getting involved in different activities outside of school time. I feel really proud earning the certificate."

Former University of Sunderland lecturer and popular television presenter on Braniac, Professor John Kilcoyne, was also given an honorary degree.

He was recognised for his outstanding work in educating young

people in science. He has already given lectures to more than 9,000 young people this year.

Prof Kilcoyne said: "It is a great honour and a privilege to be involved. We need to do all we can to encourage children to aspire to study, in particular to study science to as high a level as they can."

"The Children's University is an excellent way of doing just that." David Amos, Academy 360 associate headteacher, said: "The relationship with the university is absolutely vital in raising aspirations for the students."

"Every member of staff is keen to help students see that there are far greater opportunities after leaving school than they could ever imagine."



**BIG HONOUR:** Prof John Kilcoyne and Aleisha Robinson.

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