



U N I V E R S I T Y

The Children's University Official Blog

Children can only aspire to what they know exists

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 **Helen O'Donnell**
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11h

Wednesday, 20 April 2016

Children's University response to report stating after-school clubs boost poorer pupils' reports

by Helen O'Donnell, CEO Children's University

This morning the **BBC** reported that after-school clubs and sports can improve the academic performance and social skills of disadvantaged primary school pupils. To me, and the network of 1,000 schools that the Children's University works with in delivering many of these clubs, this is not news; this is simply our reason for doing what we do.

To see the impact of teachers and out-of-school learning backed up by findings of researcher from NatCen Social Research, Newcastle University and ASK Research is incredibly encouraging and a reinforcement of why the work of Children's University is vital.

What we do is simple. We work in partnership with teachers, schools and learning destinations all across the UK and beyond. We issue participating children a Passport to Learning, which is stamped just like a regular passport whenever they participate in activities at after-school classes and quality assured learning destinations. These destinations include wildlife centres, zoos, libraries and places of historical interest. Anywhere that children can learn and take part in beneficial activities can partner with us a learning destination – the list is constantly growing.

By joining the Children's University, learning stops being something that's contained in a classroom, and becomes something that happens anywhere and everywhere. Our work joins the dots between the classroom, museums, after school clubs, sports centres and more. Crucially, they bring back the joy to learning, boost self-confidence and, as today's report shows, improve academic attainment.

Over 100,000 children hold one of our passports so today's report has a huge impact on our work. Here at the Children's University we've been saying for a long time that after-school activities are vital. As the **Nuffield Foundation-funded** report states, "*More research is needed to understand the content of the after-school clubs and what it is about the experience that results in improved outcomes.*". I'll raise my head above the parapet and say now that we invite and welcome research into the impact of our work. The Children's University network is a highly skilled and committed network and anything that shows the worth of their work is great by me.