

Learning beyond the classroom: links and recommendations for policy makers



The State of The Nation 2023

A series of evidence-based reports examining the impact and importance of learning beyond the classroom in modern Britain

An annual research project from Children's University Trust

Written by Liam Nolan and Cordelia Howard with data analysis by Sukie Duhra

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This report is one of a series of evidence-based reports examining the impact of what goes on beyond the classroom on the lives of children and young people.

Based on extensive data collated from a bespoke digital platform, Children's University Online, the aim of the reports is to inform and improve provision by providing educators, policy makers and stakeholders of all kinds with a broad set of insights about the current state of learning beyond the classroom in contemporary Britain.

Our 2023 reports are informed by data from:

- 70,000 children
- 19,400 activities
- 704,000 hours of recorded participation.

Since 2021 our State of the Nation Reports have offered up an analysis of over 1 million hours of participation in learning beyond the classroom.

To download the rest of our reports, visit:

childrensuniversity.co.uk/stateofthenation

Learning beyond the classroom: Provision and Participation



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The role that learning beyond the classroom plays in skills development



The State of The Nation 2023

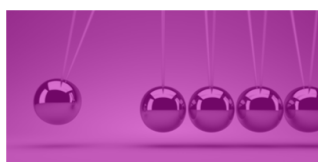
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The impact of learning beyond the classroom



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Children's University: Our reach



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Learning beyond the classroom: links and recommendations for policy makers



Learning beyond the classroom can have a life-changing impact on those who are able to participate.

With children only spending 9% of their waking life within a classroom by the time they turn 18,¹ the significance and potential of the time beyond the formal curriculum is huge. Robust evidence shows that time well spent outside the classroom can impact on skills development, attainment, social mobility and life chances. It should go without saying, therefore, that learning beyond the classroom is deserving of a greater focus from educators and policymakers.

What Children's University's State of the Nation Reports show is that Children's University as a programmatic intervention is one that has a positive impact. The evidence above illustrates this and reinforces the evidence that others have also reported. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), The University of Sussex, and our own evaluations and data analysis back this up.

However, this report should not be read as a self-congratulatory celebration of impact. It is a call to action to policy makers, educators, and other stakeholders to work with us to harness and scale the impact we know that this kind of learning can have. Yes, Children's University is an impactful programme, but where Children's University really holds potential, is when it is adopted and embedded in a local setting with coordinated and engaged stakeholders. When Local Authorities, Higher Education Institutions, and other stakeholders work to build a coordinated ecosystem of opportunities through Children's University, the change becomes systemic on a local level.

Programmatic interventions help people beat the odds. Systemic interventions can help change their odds.²

We write these reports, collect this data, and share our learning so that we can see the change we make scale and grow. We do not simply want to see Children's University grow as a programme, but instead want to see learning beyond the classroom recognised, supported and funded as an impactful systemic addition to education policy. To this end, we make the recommendations overleaf.

Footnotes:

1. <https://www.childrensuniversity.co.uk/media/1151/percentage-of-time-outside-the-classroom.pdf>
2. Karen Pittman, CEO of the Forum on Youth Investment, at Tamarack's Community Change Institute in Vancouver in 2015 <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/evaluating-systems-change-results-inquiry-framework>

Learning beyond the classroom: links and recommendations for policy makers

We recommend:

1. Greater funding for schools that should be ringfenced for learning beyond the classroom. Schools should not have to cut spending on extra-curricular activities in order to cover costs elsewhere.
2. Greater cross-department government policy bringing together the Department for Education, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This coordination could:
 - create more place-based partnerships between schools and external learning providers (the likes of which we are encouraged to see trialled by funding through NCS and the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards' Enrichment Partnerships Pilot)
 - target and prioritise learning beyond the classroom partnerships in Levelling Up Education Investment Areas where we know their impact will be greatest
 - encourage existing successful place-based partnerships to expand into neighbouring places – using the tried and tested rather than reinventing the wheel (such as the development of South Yorkshire Children's University expanding out of Sheffield)
3. Funding to be made available for young people and families to access learning opportunities beyond the classroom. If parents are to play a larger part in engaging their children in learning beyond the classroom, greater support is needed in the form of funding, subsidies, or vouchers to ensure that cost is not a barrier.
4. Incentives for businesses and employers to work with local schools and education partners.
5. Greater recognition and support for youth organisations to make meaningful links and connections with schools and other providers of opportunities.

Learning beyond the classroom: links and recommendations for policy makers

As the leading organisation working in the learning space beyond the classroom, we commit to:

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1. Continuing to share these State of the Nation Reports across government (the DfE and DCMS, as well as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)) and for the benefit of peer organisations
2. Continuing to support and grow our network of place-based delivery partners who are looking to make systemic change in their locale
3. Continuing to work with non-governmental organisations and associations (Skills Builder, Fair Education Alliance (FEA), Foundation for Education Development (FED) and others) to ensure our insights and data is able to support their wider work linked to learning beyond the classroom.

