

Appendix 1: Vignettes of seven local CUs

This section presents case studies, or vignettes, of seven CU centres, chosen in consultation with the Chief Executive and with CU Managers to represent a geographical spread of a variety of practice, well established and, in many respects exemplary of the grounded work of the Children's University. The Children's University centres are: Sefton CU, Warwickshire CU, Doncaster CU, Kent CU, Sheffield CU, Bicester CU and Hull CU.

1. Sefton CU: an antidote to the performativity culture

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council covers a vast geographical region. It has a predominantly white ethnic population of approximately 290,000 inhabitants. Its neighbours are Liverpool, Knowsley, West Lancashire and the Wirral and it is an area of relatively high deprivation, although the least deprived on Merseyside. Unemployment is higher than the national average at 6.2% and educational attainment at the end of primary (Key Stage 2) and secondary school (Key Stage 4) is similar to or above the national average. However such figures should not mask the high levels of social and economic deprivation which plague many parts of the region, with its associated drug problems and social unrest.

Sefton Children's University (SCU) provides informal learning opportunities for children, free of charge, directly through their primary schools. The SCU was initiated as a pilot scheme in 2003 within the Study Support division of the Metropolitan Borough Council, with six primary schools, one secondary and one secondary special educational needs school participating. Provision of SCU courses has grown annually since then, with figures for 2008 showing that 50% of children in the 35 participating schools take part in SCU modules. Growth continues at a rate of three or four schools per year, although pressures of workload mean that subsequent growth may need to be limited as the CU staff is working at full capacity. There is currently no marketing of courses to new schools.

Informal learning opportunities for children are offered directly through their primary schools, with most modules offered during lunchtimes or at after school clubs. The benefit to the local communities is by having opportunities for children to participate in a wide menu of activities in the safety of their school environment, embedded within the school day. Learning modules on offer are designed to extend and enhance the curriculum as an antidote to the performativity culture.

Learning modules are designed around 10 learning hours with a minimum of five hours in a module, with each hour equal to one CU credit. Attendance at each session accrues a single credit which children build up over time. In this sense credits are secured on the

basis of voluntary participation. In order for a student to bank the credits from a module they must attend for at least 80% of the sessions available.

The school CU Coordinator (sometime Extended School Coordinator) consults children and staff on the modules they would like to see offered, matching modules to possible tutors. Tutors, who participate voluntarily, receive no payment and are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds - teachers, head teachers, teaching assistants, parents, school caretakers. Where modules needing specialist tutors such as street dance, Judo and Fencing external tutors are employed and funded by the school.

Funding for modules comes from within the school. Sefton CU funding for salaries and graduation costs is met through the schools development grant. Additional funding for modules can come from a variety of funding streams which the school's Coordinator secures. Sefton CU makes a limited amount of funds available for the enhancement of modules, such Guitars for the Guitar Club (which had no guitars!). Providing CU modules does not necessarily cost the school any additional money and the primary school visited as part of this evaluation construed the CU modules as a crucial and embedded part of the school provision.

2. Warwickshire CU: putting CU terminology into all households

Warwick Children's University is managed and led under the auspices of study support provision within the Local Authority in Warwick. It is led by a CU Manager who, in turn, is managed by a senior advisor in the Local Authority. Both are articulate about their work and have developed their practices for the Children's University over several years. They are both passionate advocates for the Children's University and view it as a key mechanism for realising their objectives for study support. They see the work of the Children's University (CU) in their area as essentially 'engaging children in additional activities' out of school hours. The Cu Manager is adamant that 'CU is about learning new things, trying something different'.

This is a fundamental aspect to the CU in Warwickshire. It is important that young people choose to do an activity in their own time and that they try something new. Indeed, only first-time activities are 'counted' as CU activities in Warwick. A school may repeat an activity, and a child may decide to participate in the same activity more than once, but only the first time contributes towards the register of CU activities. The idea is that the children focus on something they're interested in and are able to demonstrate resilience and persistence. These are viewed as key skills for supporting the learner in all their work, inside and outside the classroom. CU is potentially a provision for every child in Warwickshire and there is an espoused commitment to 'put CU terminology into all households'. The CU philosophy extends to a Kid's College for 5-7 year olds.

All activities take place on school sites and are led by school staff who volunteer to help. The CU Manager's role is as advisor, facilitator and mentor. There are learning modules that the schools can adopt and adapt and which provide useful resources, although the activities are primarily 'owned' by the particular school. Schools apply to participate in

the Warwickshire CU. They receive a pack from the CU Manager and are entitled to support visits. There is some funding available, particularly to support schools new to the endeavour. Schools complete registers and submit them centrally to the CU. The children receive certificates for participation and completion. 120 out of 250 schools are currently registered. Warwickshire CU staff are experienced with the Quality in Study Support and Extended Services (QISS) framework and are aiming for accreditation in December 2009. They are keen to have recognition for their work and are proud of their achievements.

The senior advisor is enthusiastic about plans for development. She is working strategically within the Local Authority to make links between study support and the Extended Services Development Officer. She meets with cluster coordinators within the area to coordinate expansion and increase involvement. CU is the visible mechanism for making study support happen in Warwickshire and the concept is embedded in the culture of the education department of the Local Authority.

3. Doncaster Children's University: a harmony of purpose and vision

Doncaster is a metropolitan borough in Yorkshire. With an urban population of 74,000 of which 26% are children or young people ages between 0 to 19¹, while the wider metropolitan borough council area has a total population of 290,000. On the outskirts of Doncaster there are many former mining villages with high levels of unemployment. There is a coordinated strategy to regenerate the town and the outlying areas to improve the quality of life and opportunities for young people and families. The 'Doncaster Vision'² aims to regenerate Doncaster. There have been significant improvements in infrastructure over the last ten years and a proactive response to regeneration following the closure of the mines in the late 1980s. A new airport, opened in 2005, a new stadium, a revamped race course and the 'interchange' which links the station to the town centre are all recent developments. Radical changes are proposed within the town centre itself. The former college, courts and shopping centre are to be transformed into a cultural centre and the town is aiming to apply for city status.

During the year 2008/9 Doncaster has hit the headlines twice, related to concerns around children. Doncaster was one of four councils to receive an inadequate rating for social services in Ofsted's 2008 annual performance assessments³. After a review in January 2009 the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families ordered a new senior management team overseen by an external board which reports directly to ministers. The concerns raised by Ofsted centre around the number of children under child protection orders which remain very high in comparison to similar authorities and the procedures in place to safeguard these children. Following on the heels of this there was much reporting of the attack by two boys in foster care on another two boys⁴. Teachers and head teachers

¹ www.doncaster.gov.uk

² 2001 census

³ www.ofsted.gov.uk

⁴ www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/south_yorkshire/7987950.stm

in the schools visited as part of the evaluation have expressed concern about the extensive negative treatment and demonising of children in Doncaster but equally about the lack of certainty over future staffing within Doncaster's Children's Services.

The vision for children

The vision for children as outlined in the 'The Children and Young People's Plan 2007-2009' drawn up by the Doncaster Strategic Partnership, speaks of a commitment to ensure that Doncaster children 'lead active, healthy and fun lives...they will make a major contribution to the Doncaster community'. Some of the key priorities of the plan include improving participation rates at post-16 in education and widening participation by children in a range of arts, play, cultural and sporting activities. These are urgent priorities as the educational outcomes at Key Stage 4 are below national average as are the outcomes at Key Stage 3. There is considerable funding to support the raising of aspirations and educational outcomes for children in Doncaster. Doncaster's New Deal for Communities (NDC) is a nationally funded programme from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Doncaster CU has been in operation since November 2006. The CU Manager was appointed in May 2007. A pilot phase ran from November 2006 to May 2007 with a graduation at Doncaster College 'The Hub' in May 2007. The CU Manager from Hull CU was commissioned to run the pilot which consisted of two learning modules and two schools. By summer 2008 three primary schools within the central New Deal area in Doncaster had been involved with learning modules being offered free of charge due to funding from New Deal. By June 2008 7 primary and junior schools have been involved and approximately 170 children have graduated from CU.

The vision for Doncaster CU is firmly aligned with the vision for Doncaster outlined above. The clarity of the vision has enabled significant progress to have been achieved since the CU was set up in November 2006. The CU Manager has a strong and clearly articulated vision of what Doncaster's Children's University should be. She laments the number of 16 year olds who leave school saying 'they opt out...we need to engage them to see that learning goes on for ever'. An important part of her vision for CU is the bridging role between the college and the local schools. She believes that children can be inspired and motivated to continue learning if they experience what a college can offer. Doncaster CU has targeted those schools within the New Deal post code areas and other schools in former mining villages where concerns about engagement of children in learning is felt most keenly.

Another cornerstone of the CU vision is to create learning experiences for children drawing on community resources and expertise from within the community. A cookery module has been developed based in the training kitchen at the college. A reading module has been organised in conjunction with the library service and the bookshop Waterstones, and there is a module based around the new football stadium in Doncaster. The teachers and head teachers interviewed echoed the view that raising the aspirations of the children of Doncaster through such activities is essential if they were to fully engage in learning. One head teacher spoke of the importance of widening the children's experience as the

children and families in her school, in a former mining village, live, she said, in an 'insular society' and few participate in educational or cultural outings. They may 'hop on the bus to the supermarket but going further afield even to Doncaster is expensive'. In the same conversation staff at her school spoke of the moral imperative of connecting these children with other experiences 'How do they know what's out there unless it's brought to them or you take them out?'

Doncaster CU is given financial and strategic support from the college but, perhaps most importantly, is the clear message about its importance which has come from the principal. The CU Manager believes this involvement gives a significant and important message that the Children's University is valued.

4. Kent CU: enhancing learning capacity

Kent, the 'Garden of England', has a growing population, standing at one a quarter of a million in 2008, with above average levels of employment. It is comprised of twelve local district authorities, and Medway as a unitary authority with its own Children's University. As part of trend for rising attainment, in 2008 65% of 16 year olds achieved at least five GCSEs at A* to C. Kent is one of the few remaining counties to retain the 11 plus.

The Children's University (KCU), in operation since 1998, is an out-of-school hours informal learning scheme, based within the Community School team of the Children, Families, Health and Education Directorate of the County Council. Raising attainment and improving self confidence are key objectives. KCU provides out-of-school learning opportunities for children across the county. Most of its courses are targeted at areas of relative high deprivation and take place in blocks of three consecutive Saturday mornings throughout the year. KCU currently offers activities in eleven different areas of Kent, each area broadly corresponding to a school cluster group based around a single town/city in a district. While provision is open to all children who attend an affiliated school, there are some courses aimed at specific groups of children or levels of ability, such as the Gifted and Talented programme. Families are asked to make a voluntary contribution to costs of the courses with additional funding coming from Kent County Council, participating borough councils, the national Children's University and some local businesses.

Provision is coordinated by a Study Support Coordinator, working closely with schools to identify providers, exploring funding streams and identifying and sharing good practice. The KCU is a key provider, among others such as Playing for Success, Kent County Council, businesses and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

Most courses run for up to three consecutive Saturdays on a term by term basis with modules organised around key learning outcomes with the most popular offerings being informal workshops in creative/ arts/ crafts rather academic modules which have been offered and proved to be less popular. Saturday sessions are complemented by summer schools, holiday clubs, family learning events and master classes.

A school case study (primary)

Riverview Junior School in Gravesend is a typical Children's University site, offering courses to all of its pupils. Children opt for individual modules, then assigned on a first come basis, building up learning credits over time. All participating children work towards achieving a bronze, silver and gold award, presented at Children's University ceremonies at the end of each academic year. Riverview is a relatively large school, with 468 pupils on roll. It provides an education based around the three 'R's: respect, responsibility and reliability. A significant number of pupils take part in Children's University modules, actively encouraged to do so by their head teacher who has been actively involved with KCU for over ten years. She is an ambassador for the scheme which she describes as a 'form of curriculum enrichment, one which nurtures children's interests in informal learning environments'.

The emphasis here, as in all CU centres in on active learning with children engaged in activities without too much instruction or hand holding, rather with a pedagogy aimed at enhancing learning capacity, resting on trust and a belief that all children can learn when they take charge of their own learning. It is a defining characteristic of the Kent CU and held in place by a strong quality assurance approach. It has achieved Advanced status awards from Quality in Study Support and Extended Services (QISS). It is seen by the CU Manager, as a vital tool within the self-evaluation process, not only highlighting strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement but also as a means of organising provision.

5. Sheffield CU: a family of provision

Similar to Warwickshire CU, the Children's University in Sheffield is led by a CU Manager employed by the Local Authority and run within the system for Study Support. Sheffield CU was originally established in the early 1990s but it has been significantly re-invigorated in recent years, and appreciates the boost afforded by the rejuvenation of the national organisation. There is a strong commitment to the Children's University in Sheffield, both for local delivery and within a national organisation. The CU Manager is an impassioned advocate for CU work and her colleagues responsible for funding maximise every opportunity to support the Sheffield CU and ensure resources for sustainability.

The CU Manager refers to the significance of 'University' as a word resonant with universal. She speaks about 'rewarding children's' commitment to choosing to learn something in their own time'. She views her work as forming part of a 'family of provision', encompassing a 'portfolio of experience, choice and learning' and she describes 'pathways to learning' and the importance of children 'feeling empowered, taking control'. She likens the concept of the Children's University to that of the Open University. In this way, the CU Manager demonstrates a thoughtfulness and passion for her work. The Sheffield CU is embedded in the study support department within the Local Authority.

Sheffield CU works with 25 primary schools and 5 secondary schools. Their stated aim is to work with all primary schools and an increased number of secondary schools. It has a very robust structure for organisation and delivery and a clear framework for monitoring and administration.

Schools apply to join and are required to register for a minimum of six activities. They are provided with a substantial pack complete with various administrative forms including registers, evaluations forms and marketing materials. The central Sheffield CU locally provides module resources, comprising planning sheets content information and activity ideas. The work is coordinated within schools by assigned learning mentors. Learning modules are delivered exclusively in schools by staff recruited or employed by schools and out-of-school hours; this includes school holidays. There is a citywide policy of not charging families for CU provision; costs are met by a contribution from the Local Authority. This is fundamentally important to the CU Manager and her colleagues and to the schools involved.

One head teacher was fiercely protective of the importance of his school's involvement with Sheffield CU and was clear that it was successful in part because there was no cost to the families. He asserted that he would not be able to allow his school to participate if the situation was otherwise. He was also an advocate of what he termed 'the language of meritocracy.' He held the firm view that involvement with the CU allowed otherwise deprived families to talk about university and to perhaps imagine their children attending university. It was extremely important in the context of low esteem and low aspirations. Sheffield CU applied successfully for funding from the national executive and is currently closely monitoring their progress towards the aims set out in the original funding bid.

Sheffield CU is a self-confident organisation that is well led and supported by the Local Authority. They compile data that identifies children who participate in CU activities and their corresponding SATs results. They are reticent to draw causal links, but are confident to assert that participation in CU activities reinforces good practice in schools and the data support the claim that children who participate in CU activities attain good levels in the statutory assessment in Year 6 and better in comparison to those who don't. There is likely to be a connection between schools who engage with CU and study support and those who don't, and with young people who engage with out-of-school hours learning and those who don't. What is significant is that Sheffield CU has the means to access this data and is comfortable with the analysis and scrutiny of this data. Their work is firmly embedded in the work of the schools whom they serve and the Local Authority. The CU Manager brings a passion and commitment to her role and has the capacity to think creatively. She works hard on behalf of school colleagues and the young people, and relishes the opportunity to make a difference.

Three local sites under scrutiny: a study of passion, professionalism and pragmatism

The three local sites visited for the purposes of this phase of the evaluation were all well-established long standing centres of CU activity. They were staffed by individuals who had each formulated clear ideologies for their work and who were keen to articulate their philosophy and commitment. The work was justified and valued with high levels of seriousness and professionalism. There is a pragmatic view about maintaining what is necessary locally and maintaining close links with the national CU. Considerable enthusiasm was expressed for belonging to the national CU, seeing it as a vital component for survival and sustainability over time. It is interesting that the close links with schools and study support seems to make monitoring, data gathering and correspondence to learning and attainment possible.

A school case study (primary)

At Meynell Primary School the learning mentor was very pleased to see the CU Manager and it is obvious that he derives considerable support, guidance and encouragement from her. He talked about the various clubs, activities and holiday events sponsored by the Sheffield CU and encompassing his work in study support. He had a small room to work in and an established role of supporting and mentoring students. He often identified children who might benefit from certain activities and skills development and encouraged them to participate. . He also worked with families to ensure that communication was successful. This was a very systematic incarnation of CU work firmly aligned to the work of the school.

6. Bicester CU: a study in inclusiveness

Bicester is a small market town within the Oxfordshire countryside with long standing military connections; the nearby village of Ambrosden houses a military garrison whose personnel serve on six months tours of Iraq. The town is three miles from the M40, is served by two railway stations and there are plans for a new east-west rail link through Bicester. Bicester's location makes it an ideal commuter base. The university city of Oxford is within 15 miles to the south, Birmingham is within one hour traveling distance to the north and London one hour to the south. 'Bicester Village', the designer outlet shopping centre draws in three million visitors a year and has provided an economic boost to the town. The Town Council and the Chamber of Commerce are committed to building on the possibilities Bicester's location affords it by developing its economic and tourist potential.

Bicester has a population of approximately 28,000 with an ethnic minority population of 8.9%⁵ and approximately 8,000 children of school age⁶. The educational outcomes at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are broadly in line with national averages but there are two adjoining wards where outcomes are significantly below national averages⁷. The newly

⁵ 2001 census

⁶ 2001 census

⁷ www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk

built Children's Centre is located within this area and the school I have visited and the children I have shadowed is also within this area.

Bicester CU has been in existence since 1999 and is well established in the primary schools in the town and surrounding villages. The CU Manager's involvement is part of her role as Extended Schools Manager. Until September 2008 CU was a discrete part of the role, with a time allocation of 3.5 hours per week out of 25 hours for the post as Extended Schools Manager. However September 2008 saw a change in the leadership and management of Extended Schools in Bicester which has brought the out-of-hours learning together more coherently, including CU which is now more fully integrated within the Extended Schools Model. This new structure is outlined below.

Children's University: nested within Extended Schools Provision

The leadership and management structure for Extended Schools has been re-organised and this is seen as a helpful and strategic move generally and beneficial to CU which has been brought more formally into this structure and provision for out-of-hours learning in Bicester. One of the primary head teachers is now seconded a day per week to 'drive the Extended Schools provision forward'; this head teacher is the CU Manager's line manager. This has made an enormous difference to her work within Extended Schools and therefore Children's University. Her line manager gives her constructive feedback and she is able to 'bounce ideas around with him'. This relationship has speeded up the decision making process which, until this year, was a committee process as she can telephone him or e-mail him for quick feedback and support with decision making. There is now an Extended Services Executive which has been tasked by the Bicester in Learning Partnership (BLiP), the primary and secondary head teachers in the town to manage the Extended Schools provision. This executive group consists of four head teachers and the CU Manager. The group gives a financial and strategic steer to the operations group which 'Do the stuff'. The operations group is comprised of the seconded head teacher, representatives of the two Children's Centres, secondary school representatives and three primary head teachers. One of the primary head teachers is from the school that launched CU originally and is a proactive supporter of CU in the town. Also represented are the Locality Coordinator and the Courtyard Youth Arts Centre. It had been a struggle without an administrative assistant for many months which has made the task of coordinating the CU activities a challenge but a new person is now in post for 18 hours per week. Part of the remit for the post is to support CU activities.

Pathfinder programme

This government initiative involves the two secondary schools, the special school and the primary schools in Bicester – a total of 18 schools. Money is devolved to schools to support Extended Schools provision. The money was agreed within the BLiP to be spent within the primary schools (including the special school) in the first instance. The rationale for this is clear: early intervention is crucial if children are to make the most of their learning. The CU Manager believes that that the Extended Services Provision in Bicester is good but that often families need 'a hand in the small of the back' to help them find the support or learning activities which will support them and their families. She also believes passionately that conversations about the possibilities for children need

to be structured and support materials provided so that parents can clearly see the opportunities available to them. To this end she has devised the 'Parent Pizza' to support a discussion with a family about their needs. The pizza shows at a glance the help, activities, childcare and support for parents and families. CU provision is embedded within this. The material is clear about its intention 'to help you and your child get the best out of school. We can help you choose one or two activities which take place out-of-school-hours. We can help with transport, childcare or other assistance'. A sum of £300 then pays for the activities chosen over a 12 month period. The CU Manager believes that such simple tools are crucial to 'enable a conversation with a parent who perhaps can't read, finds it hard to organise their thinking due to depression or has English as a second language'. The conversation can be initiated by a teacher, someone from Home Start, the CU Manager herself, a home-school link or a SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator).

Identification of families: the sieve

The Extended Schools Executive has devised a process of 'going through the sieve' where children have been identified on the basis of criteria such as free school meals, the point at which they were on the special needs register, poor attendance at school or below age related performance in tests. Schools can also recommend that money is made available to a family if circumstances change quickly within a family. The seconded head teacher devised a spread sheet which holds the data and has identified the children. These families have been contacted and the 'Parent pizza' is used to structure the conversation with them. 200 families have been identified in Bicester to offer out-of-hours learning for their children through this process.

One of the boys I [the evaluator] have followed this year has taken part for the first time in out-of-hours learning and was identified by his head teacher as the circumstances within his family change dramatically. His head teacher recommended him for a recipient of Pathfinder money and he has attended CU activities all year, following a discussion with his parents about his learning and emotional needs. His father lost his job and this triggered a period of mental illness. The boy was suddenly often late at school, very tired and lacking in confidence. His head teacher felt that he would benefit from CU activities and he has undertaken art and sporting activities all year. His head teacher explained that the sessions 'have given his parents a breathing space and CU has supported his fragile self –esteem and confidence'. The activities on offer are varied and include:

- DJ skills
- Lyric writing
- a first aid course 'Blood, Burns and Bites'
- Healthy Food
- Pottery magic
- Digital photography
- Science for fun
- Multi-sports
- Fun fashion

A school case study (secondary)

The head teacher at the Brookside School is a strong supporter of CU. He sees the benefits in several ways. Firstly he believes that CU offers the children at his secondary school opportunities and access to things that they would never experience at an affordable price. These opportunities are crucial if the 'life chances of the children at the school are to be enhanced'. He is committed to the model of CU activities remaining affordable and for him this is one of its greatest strengths in Bicester. His school is situated next to one of the newly built Children's Centres in a ward where the educational outcomes at Key Stage 3 (when children are aged 14) and at Key Stage 4 (when children are aged 16) are significantly below average.⁸ The educational outcomes in Bicester more generally are broadly in line with national averages. Families at his school suffer from what the national Children's University terms 'aspirational deprivation' and so CU can play a significant part in enriching learning and 'opening children's eyes to the possibilities for them'. He believes that for a lot of his children CU has helped them to engage back at school. All of the teachers at his school lead out-of-hours learning for the children and many within CU as tutors. He explains that the 'the relationships created in CU cement the relationships back at school enabling a greater focus on learning'. These relationships with adults in different contexts he believes also enable a smoother transition to secondary school as 'they gain confidence in interacting and meeting new people and forming learning relationships with them'.

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits for the children, according to the head, is the pedagogical approach 'there are no targets, no objectives and no plenaries'. He explained that there is a common goal, for example 'we are all going to make an animal made from clay but there is flexibility about how to get there and freedom about what the animal will look like at the end. It is not a factory approach.' The approach is child-centred and exploratory rather than a learning template which is followed by all. The learning and tutoring approach at CU is in synergy with the curriculum at the school. The school adopted a 'Leading Aspect Award' approach two years ago which aims to 'develop life long learning by embracing pupil voice and personalised learning'. They received their 'Leading Aspect Award' in January 2009 for the curriculum – the first such award in Oxfordshire. The school starts by asking the children 'How do you want to learn?' They choose the topic and decide how they will report back on their learning. One group built an Anderson Centre as part of a World War II topic and organised a VE day party for parents. The head teacher feels that it is probably no coincidence that the school has developed this pupil-centred and pupil-led approach to learning. CU was born in the school, the pottery sessions take place on the school site and the teachers at the school have had a long association with CU activities. The benefits of a more creative approach to learning have been experienced and although it is difficult to draw a connecting line between the pedagogical approach at CU and the school's approach, there is a harmony between the two.

7. Hull: building a sustainable future

⁸ www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk

Children's University provision in Hull is currently organised as a private limited company and was supported in this development by the national Children's University. It is situated in offices on the campus of the University of Hull. It has been in existence since 1991 and has developed through a number of different manifestations, including several years run under the auspices of the Local Education Authority. The lead figure throughout has been the CU Manager, a dynamic visionary who leads the work of the Children's University with a passion and commitment which had proven influential and which has brought attention to the work from politicians and the media. There is a Board of Trustees that oversees his work and whose constituents represent local businesses and schools. The CU Manager is assisted by a full time administrator. Much of the CU Manager's work is centred on the need to raise funds and ensure sustainability. He spends considerable time meeting potential donors and promoting the work.

There is a membership scheme for Hull Children's University (HCU) that invites interested members of the public to join. Members are likened to shareholders, although they do not pay a fee to join, and they receive information, news and invitations to public meetings. This is an expression of the desire to increase and develop the network of stakeholders and prospective members are encouraged to join so that they can become 'a vital part of the company'.

There is also a fund-raising strategy, which takes the form of a club. Local companies are invited to donate £1,000, or a sum of money that they can afford, 'to support the activities of Hull Children's University' and become a member of the CU1K Club. The information for interested company budget holders emphasises the value to the companies of contributing to the development of the future workforce. It places a focus on the benefits of local partnerships and makes explicit the need for sustainability.

This is a manifestation of the need to build and sustain local networks. As a limited company, HCU is operating in the market place and resources continue to be a significant issue for them.

The recent history and trajectory of HCU is necessarily fundamental to the CU Manager and his ideas for development. He adheres to halcyon days when provision was widespread throughout the city and colleagues were plentiful. He continues to receive significant support from head teacher colleagues familiar with his approach and who remain confident and trusting. He has a variety of models of delivery to refer to and has a number of volunteers to call upon if necessary. The HCU provision is comprised of a core six modules, or programmes. They reflect the CU Manager's awareness of environmental concerns, local business and environmental opportunities and personal development issues; their titles reflect on optimistic, life-affirming content:

- My Space
- Life Fitness
- Fuel and Energy

- Aspirations and Ambitions
- There's More To Life Than Me
- You Can Change The World

Each programme has explicit content and comprises a series of sessions to be delivered by a tutor with the support of mentors. Mentoring is a significant element in the programmes. The work is designed to consist of direct teaching, augmented with repeated opportunities for discussion and reflection. Participation involves attendance, engagement, discussion and reflection supplemented with a minimum of formal work. Business connections are utilised wherever possible and visits to spaces other than schools are encouraged. The packs accompanying the programmes contain explicit objectives, content and outcomes. They are detailed and designed to be used by tutors to ensure a degree of consistency of provision. They are structured to allow for monitoring and self-evaluation.

The reality of his current situation is that the CU Manager largely works in schools with whom he has a long-standing relationship and he is the sole tutor. The central funding pays for salaries, and it allows for the development of resources. Schools who agree to participate in Children's University activities fund this from their own budgets. One head teacher spoke of the need to be 'strategic and creative', convincing her governors of the value of 'exposing the pupils to visits and contact with other responsible and capable adults'.

A school case study (primary)

The CU manager is contracted to work with the Year 6 (children aged 11) in Bude Primary School. He has liaised with the Year 6 teacher and has arranged to lead three field trips over the course of an academic year. These include a trip to London and a visit to the Houses of Parliament, a day out to a heritage centre in a Yorkshire valley, and a visit to Hull Dockyards.

Bude Primary School is on the Bransholme Estate in Hull. The local area is solely comprised of council subsidised housing and unemployment is very high. Local industry has been severely diminished in recent years. The head teacher described an inward-looking community 'locked in' both physically and psychologically. Low self-esteem combined with few opportunities and little inspiration led to a depressed outlook for young people. In this context the head teacher was clear that the CU Manager's involvement afforded the children – and staff – opportunities for 'a lift' and respite. The school is on the edge of the estate. It has an expanse of green fields surrounding it on three sides and considerable effort has been made to maximise opportunities for planting flowers and improving the outside environment. The school is a single storey, sprawling building that has a warren-like feel. Typically, the walls are decorated with pupils' work and many signs for direction and instruction. The building was devastated by flooding 18 months previously, and improvements are patchy. The school intake includes 40% who are entitled to free school meals. This is a relatively high percentage and defines the school as one in challenging circumstances.

The head teacher refers to the CU contribution as comprising 'awe and wonder', inspirational teaching and 'opportunities to get out and about'. Taking children on visits involved the forming of relationships and opportunities for dialogue with other adults, including another male role model. This has 'immeasurable value' and 'feeds into the whole system for raising esteem, achievement, and, ultimately, attainment'. The head teacher viewed the CU's contribution as a valuable addition to the rigour and diversity that the school was able to offer. In particular, she referred to pupils' low attainment levels for writing that were targeted by the CU's work that offered opportunities for writing for a purpose, and arising from lived, active experiences.

Appendix 2 : Seventeen children

This section is a case study of seventeen children drawn from seven CU settings: Sefton CU, Warwickshire CU, Doncaster CU, Kent CU, Sheffield CU, Bicester CU and Hull CU. These children were observed and interviewed, in some cases where practicable complemented by conversations with their teachers and/or parents.

Jamie

Jamie is an only child living at home with his mum, who is supportive of his schooling and education. Jamie could be described as a slow learner who had, until Year 5 (aged 10), experienced below average attainment. He had struggled to understand basic numeracy and literacy skills, and his low attainment was construed as a key factor in explaining his fluctuating attitude to learning in general, and to in-school learning in particular. However, during Year 5 Jamie was considered by his teacher as among the most improved pupils in the year group. He had made considerable progress in all areas of the curriculum and she was predicting that he should achieve Level 4 (the national expectation for children aged 11) in his Key Stage 2 SATs (end of primary school national tests), predicting that if his recent rate of improvement continued he could achieve Level 5 (above the national expectation).

Jamie was keen to talk about school, trips and visits and the CU courses he had opted to follow. He spoke slowly and carefully, in a manner which initially resembled Bernstein's 'restricted speech code', however as his accounts developed, his range of vocabulary extended and his ability to explain his school experience and choices became among the most sophisticated in the group. In terms of school he enjoyed subjects where he perceived he could achieve. For example he spoke of 'feeling good' about himself and his progress in Maths where he had struggled with the work, but now he realised that if he slowed down and tried a different method he could often reach the correct answer. He used examples from literacy where he realised that he often needed the help of the teacher but that after a certain point he didn't need it anymore because he understood what was being asked of him and that he 'could do it'. This 'can do' attitude was emulated and strengthened by his participation in CU course.

Jamie explained how the CU courses provided an opportunity for him to 'work on areas' that he knew weren't his strengths. Describing himself as being 'not really good at anything in particular, but always willing to try', Jamie opted for courses which he identified as being in areas/skills in which he needed to work on in order to improve. He opted for running club because he thought he wasn't as good as most of his classmates. He chose multi-skills because it helped him to concentrate on more than one thing at a time. He was looking forward to Year 6 when he thought he'd like to learn some cooking skills. It was clear that Jamie's choice of course was made in a structured formulaic way,

possibly reflective a low self esteem and that he approached the courses with a view to learning more than merely participating.

Jamie's involvement in CU courses had started during Year 4 (aged 9). Although it is not possible to identify a correlation between his improved attainment and involvement in CU courses it is difficult to negate the positive relationship between the two. Served with a menu of activities Jamie was opting into learning culture which was almost certain to have a positive impact on his self esteem and efficacy.

Aaron

Aaron lives at home with both parents and is the youngest of three boys who had all attended the same school. His parents were described as very supportive and happy for the school to take primary responsibility for Aaron's learning. He was confident and articulate, a stereotypical 'sporty boy', proud of his football team (Liverpool) and keen to participate in and observe many different sports. He had taken part in a range of CU courses including multi-skills, football and speed stacking, and was working towards achieving his gold award at the end of primary school. Unsurprisingly, Aaron was looking forward to the summer term of activities which included a range of athletics courses.

In school Aaron was predicted by his teachers to achieve Level 4s at the end of Key Stage 2, and probably a Level 5 in Science. He enjoyed learning about the human body and doing experiments when he 'didn't know what would happen when he mixed different things together'. His attendance was excellent and he demonstrated a very positive attitude to learning, although his teacher felt that his perception of his own academic capabilities had a tendency to be inflated and that he sometimes found it difficult to act on formative feedback.

For Aaron the CU courses offered the option of extending his school based learning in ways which are unlikely to be replicated in other ways.

Claudia

Claudia lives at home with her dad and elder siblings having had limited contact with her mum throughout her life. Identified as a vulnerable child, 'at risk of underachieving', the school's Family Key Worker maintains regular contact with Claudia's dad and elder brothers. She experiences a high level of support from the school and has been a frequent attendee of CU courses. On the other hand she appears to participate in very few other organised activities outside of school.

Claudia's school attendance is very good and she displays an excellent attitude to learning, taking regular advantage of the Study Support opportunities in the school. She identified Art as her favourite lesson, identifying the way in which it made her feel positive about what she could do. Her attainment was below average and her teacher predicted Level 3 (below national expectation) across the board in her SATs. During observations and meetings with Claudia she appeared attentive in class, to ask for assistance when she required it and appeared to be actively engaged 'on task'.

Claudia has taken many CU courses and was on target to achieve the gold award at the end of the year. These courses included:

- Chinese Culture (taken as part of a visit to China in Year 5)
- Football
- Athletics
- Rugby
- Ozzies (Church group)
- Feeling Good Club

She was positive about all of the courses but in particular the 'Feeling Good Club'. This is a course which children could opt into throughout their schooling accruing credits as they went. It was based on the premise that there were ways in which negative feelings could be handled, through focusing on making positive contributions. During this course Claudia explained how she was learning how to handle 'sadness' through talking to others, making cards for her family and friends and sometimes being able to join in fun/feeling good activities such as making chocolate fondue (for herself and others). Claudia is an example of a child who would seemingly suffer further problems if the CU courses were not on offer within the school.

Courtney

Courtney is a bright, academically able and articulate girl who was predicted to achieve Level 5s in her SATs. She displays a wide range of interests which she takes part in both in and out of school. She is a member of the local Athletics Club, a local Street Dance club and enjoys swimming at weekends.

In school Courtney's favourite subject is Maths which she describes as providing a challenge. She is particularly motivated by problem solving activities, where she needs to think of strategies to work out routes through a problem. She spoke of the benefits of being able to understand Maths and number as it would 'help you with managing money' in later life. Similarly when discussing her enjoyment the CU course in Spanish she made external links to the opportunities for foreign travel in later life. In this sense Courtney could be seen to display the metacognitive skills often evident in high achieving children in primary schools. Acutely aware of the benefits (both short and long term) of extra-curricular activities it is not surprising that Courtney was an active participator in CU courses.

Courtney had participated in many CU sports courses; rugby, football and was looking forward to the summer term of athletics options. She was motivated by the lure of a gold award at the end of the year and seemed to construe CU courses as an integral part of her school life.

Robbie

Robbie is an extremely gifted child, particularly in relation to Maths and Science. Throughout Key Stage 2 he had been working on extension activities in Maths which

extended beyond the Level 5 SATs. It was estimated that in Year 6 he was coping with Maths work equivalent to that of a Year 9 (children aged 14) standard. He particularly enjoyed Maths and Science partly because of his talents in both, but also because of the level of challenge they constantly provided him. Robbie was being predicted Level 5 in his Key Stage 2 SATs. He had an excellent school attendance record however he displayed a fluctuating attitude to in-school learning. It was feared that an anti-school ethos would impact on his attainment at high school where he would become largely free from the watchful eye of so many staff members who knew his family background and academic potential.

Robbie is the eldest of two boys who live at home with their mum, neither boy having any contact with their fathers. Robbie had spent time in care during his pre-school years as a result of his mother being imprisoned for house burglary whilst addicted to heroin. Since being released from prison Robbie's mum had stayed clean of drugs and was keen for both sons to reach their potential, however she was struggling to do this both socially and economically. Unable to find permanent employment Robbie's mum was reliant on state benefits which meant that when Robbie passed the entrance exams (with a score of 97%) for the nearby private school, his mum had no means by which she could contribute to the fees or associated costs.

Robbie has been a prolific attendee of CU courses. He had participated in courses throughout his school life; sports related, Maths Challenge, the Chinese Culture Club (Sefton have strong links with Taiwan) and Ozzies church group. He would be receiving his gold award at the end of the year. For Robbie the CU modules provided a useful means through which he could extend the school day, serving to keep him from wandering the streets of and being attracted by negative local street culture.

Siân

Siân is a lively girl with a particular interest in sport and art, which she describes as providing her with ways to 'feel good'. Her enjoyment of art is exemplified by her sketch book which is full of impressive drawings and experimental use of colour. She spoke of the way that positive reinforcement increased her self confidence, and how producing a drawing which 'other' people commented as being good was the 'best part' of school. This desire for positive appraisal was equally prominent in her discussion of sports where being part of a football or rugby team raised her self worth. Both of these examples can be applied to the school ethos of 'Raising Aspirations', Siân was being given licence to perceive school opportunities as a means of raising her own self worth and in turn aspirations in life.

Siân's teachers predicted that she would achieve Level 3 in her SATs, with a possibility of Level 4 in Reading. Her below average attainment had been a feature throughout her school life. However as she progressed through Key Stage 2 staff felt that her attendance and attitude to learning had improved. She was focusing increasingly on the areas where she felt she could achieve and this was confirmed by her choice of opting into CU courses. Siân was an active user of the CU, having attended:

- Chinese Culture (taken as part of a visit to China in Year 5)
- Football
- Rugby
- Ozzies (Church group)
- Feeling Good Club

As with the other girls in the group she is motivated by the achievement of the gold award at the end of primary school.

Ben

Ben was attending his sixth complete CU course at the time of interview. He was working towards achieving his 'gold certificate' during Year 5. He was an active boy who enjoyed school, participated in a range of out-of-school learning opportunities and was described by his mum and class teacher as a boy who 'always gives his best'.

The elder of two children Ben, lives with his parents. Part of a strong extended family network he has regular contact with his grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins who live in the same town. His mum describes him as a 'relatively shy and sensitive boy who grows in confidence all the time'. She credited the Children's University courses as being a major contributor to Ben's social development. Through these courses he has been encouraged to socialise beyond his immediate network which she perceived as having an added benefit of easing the transition from primary to secondary school.

Ben had lacked confidence from a young age, which may be explained by his relatively slow development of speech. He received one-to-one attention from a speech therapist for two years before starting school. This lack of confidence prompted his parents to encourage Ben to try a Dance and Drama club when he started school, which he did. He particularly enjoyed the active participatory learning it afforded him. He attended the classes until the age of nine when he was attracted to the Children's University courses being offered through his school as a way of trying out new ideas in an experimental way.

Since participating in a range of courses (see below) Ben has developed the confidence to take up a range of learning opportunities. He swims regularly, is a cub scout, has tennis lessons and enjoys reading and researching about different forms of transport, trains and aviation in particular.

Ben's mum actively encouraged him to try out new things, as way of raising his aspirations. She wants him to pursue a range of interests and develop a broad set of life skills. She realised that he was not academically strong, a mid-achiever and did not want to buy into the private tuition which she saw as a 'false economy'. She construed the CU courses as complimenting his school life, where a primary emphasis was placed on curriculum attainment.

Ben has had an excellent attendance record and was considered a boy who always gives his best to whatever task was at hand. His class teacher described him as academically

‘average’ always attempting his homework and seeking clarification from the teacher or his parents when he deemed it necessary. Observing Ben in class, showed that he was attentive and alert to the teachers questions, even in Religious Education, which he admitted was his ‘least favourite’ subject. He was taught in set two (of four) for Maths and set three (of four) for Literacy and predicted to attain Level 4 in his end of Key Stage 2 SATs.

Ben’s academic assessment profile illustrates a boy who is achieving national averages. The teachers felt that through participating in CU courses Ben was strengthening his engagement to learn.

NC Level of attainment	Maths	Reading	Writing	Science
Year 1	2B	2C	2B	
Year 3	3C	3A	2A	
Year 4	3A	3B	3A	
Year 5	Absent	4A	3B	
Projected Year 6 teacher assessment*	4	4	4	4
Actual result	5	4	4	4

*An average child should attain Level 4 by the end of Key Stage 2

It was the diversity of courses being offered which initially attracted Ben to CU courses. He was especially keen to ‘try’ out something new and was quick to point out the learning benefits that the different courses had on his school work.

- **Creative Writing:**
‘I really used to struggle with stories and my writing so I took a course in Creative Writing. The teacher gave us loads of different ideas for starting off, not just pictures but words and feelings...how to get going. I learnt loads and that year (Year 5) I won a prize for the most improved pupil in Literacy. That Creative Writing course definitely helped me.’
- **Glass Painting:**
‘I’d never done that before, using the pens to outline the shape and the different coloured fillers. That helped me in Art when we were designing different symbols and in Geography when had to present our maps’.
- **Clay Modelling:**
‘I learnt how to use the modelling tools, how to hold them and get it to do what you wanted. When we did clay in class I was showing other people how to do it’.

Attending the courses not only had cognitive benefits there have been clear affective benefits too. He had become at ease socialising beyond his school based peer group and that should help to make the transition to secondary school relatively smooth. Attending

courses at a different school site to his own also encouraged him to think of 'learning' as extending beyond his school's gates.

When the local CU launched its *Learning in the Wild* programme Easter 2009 Ben was one of the first to apply for the Passport To Learning which he saw as a way of making use of the Easter holidays going places he had previously not visited. His first visit was to Canterbury Cathedral with his parents and sister, where he achieved his first passport stamp.

Ben's enjoyment of the CU courses is demonstrated by his achievement of the gold award in Year 6. While the CU award scheme served as external motivation, the active participatory learning he engaged in throughout the courses can be seen as promoting intrinsic motivation. The more he participates the more his confidence improves and with it his self efficacy.

Summary: Ben

The Three As

Attendance: Ben has excellent school attendance and achieved the gold CU award during Year 6.

Attitude: His attitude to school and life shows a clear disposition to learning. He has a thirst for exploratory and participatory learning opportunities and is aware that even though he may not excel at everything he seeks to experience as much as he can.

Achievement/attainment: Ben is a boy of average academic ability who is predicted to achieve target Level 4 in Year 6. He has shown steady progress in all areas of the school curriculum throughout Key Stage 2. Ben, his mum and class teachers said independently that they believed participating in the CUs courses has enhanced Ben's academic progress.

The case of Ben illustrates a boy (with an August birthday) who has gained in confidence, efficacy and attainment through choosing to participate in CU courses. He will be attending an all boys school from September 2009, where he says he is not looking forward to being 'the youngest all over again'.

Fiona

In a first meeting with Fiona she was she was working towards achieving her CU gold award in Year 6. She was described by her teachers as a quiet, hard working girl who lacked confidence and who had experienced an school 'dip' during Year 5, where she made little academic progress and displayed signs of an anti-school ethos. Her teachers and her parents both made reference to an improvement in her engagement to learn during Year 6 and attributed the CU as providing her with a positive engagement to learn throughout Key Stage 2, away from the school curriculum.

Fiona is the youngest of two girls, living with both parents. Her sister was at time of interview in Year 10 (aged 15) and is described as a ‘very able’ girl by her parents. It was through her sister that Fiona had been introduced to the CU courses. Fiona was particularly attracted to the range of Creative Courses on offer and spends much of her free time at home engaged in practical activities, card making, arts and crafts. She is also a keen reader, currently enjoying pre-teen books by authors such as Jacqueline Wilson.

Both parents described Fiona potentially as ‘academically able’ as her sister but they felt that she had lost her motivation to learn in Year 5, so inhibiting her overall progress. During Year 6 they described a real improvement in her attitude to school and to learning in general, which they felt may have been a result of employing a home tutor for her Maths and English work. Fiona felt that the tutor had helped her understanding of both subjects but commented that ‘sometimes I think I have lost my social life.’

Her parents feel that the CU courses had provided Fiona with a positive experience of learning outside the school walls, which complemented the formal curriculum attainment work she was engaged with at school. They made special mention of the improvement in her self-confidence during the last year.

Fiona was construed as a girl who enjoyed group work and could collaborate effectively, especially when working with more able peers. She is seen as a compliant girl, capable of independent learning but perhaps more at ease in group activities, in which there was a support network on hand.

Fiona’s assessment profile illustrates a girl who was achieving national averages in Maths and English but struggling in Science, where her teacher’s predicted she would struggle to achieve a Level 4. Fiona talked about the anxiety she felt in preparing for tests and her SATs in particular. She felt particularly uneasy performing under timed conditions and worried that she might come across a word she didn’t understand, and would panic.

NC Level of attainment	Maths	Reading	Writing	Science
Year 1	2B	2B	2B	
Year 3	2A	2A	2A	
Year 4	3C	3B	3A	
Year 5	3C	3B	3B	
Projected Year 6 teacher assessment*	4	4/5	4	4
Actual result	4	5	4	4

*An average child should attain level 4 by the end of KS2

Conversely, Fiona’ spoke with enthusiasm about all the CU courses she had completed. Her choice of courses reflected her disposition to creativity. Through participating in

these courses she was able to spend time on the types of activities she was instinctively interested in and could excel at, which in turn increased her self worth.

- Clay Away:
'I choice that because of the freedom you had to make whatever you liked. In school it's usually the teacher telling you what to do, but on that one I got to make random items, pots and things. Free choice I like that.'
- Nature Detectives:
'Helped us to think about our outdoors. It helped us in Science-it looked interesting and the teacher took us out on a nature trail, we could collect things are bring them back to make things with'.

Summary: Fiona

The Three As

Attendance: School and CU attendance were both exemplary.

Attitude: Fiona's attitude to school showed signs of a learning disposition, however her 'academic' dip in Year 5 should alert us all to the precarious nature of year on year achievement and changing attitudes to schooling. Conversely, her positive experience of CU courses may have counter-balanced this.

Achievement/attainment: Fiona was 'academically average' should achieve Level 4 in all her subjects at the end of Year 6.

Like Ben, Fiona's enjoyment of the CU courses is demonstrated by her achievement of the gold award in Year 6, and her continuation with the CU courses, including a Family Learning event (Glass Painting) beyond this time. All parties would agree that the CU courses offered Fiona the opportunity to engage in structured, well organised activities which she herself had opted into. This combination of high quality learning provision and individual agency was seen to have a positive effect on Fiona's social development.

Fiona did not take the 11+ exam and will be attending her local comprehensive school from September 2009. Faced with the transition from primary to secondary school she will have to forge new friendships as her close peer group is being dispersed across a wide range of different schools. Through participating in CU courses she has begun to experience the process of socialising with a wider network of people in new arenas, developing skills which should help to make the transition from primary to secondary school a successful one.

Katie

Katie is an articulate, conscientious and confident girl, described by her teachers ‘a good all-rounder’. She was working towards achieving her silver CU award during Year 6.

Katie is the youngest of four children, and the only daughter who lives at home in with both parents. Her mum is a teacher who recognised Katie’s academic abilities and described her ‘a very bright girl’, who was confident and lively. Being academically able and part of a strong extended family network it is no surprise that Katie was very comfortable in adult company. At home she enjoyed music, art and sporting activities. She was a regular swimmer and played two musical instruments. She was always able to occupy her time whether it was independently, with her peers or family members.

Katie was on the school’s Gifted and Talented (G&T) register. As the chart below illustrates Katie was already working beyond the national average of Level 4 during Year 5 of her schooling.

Key Stage	Maths	Reading	Writing	Science
Year 1	3C	3C	23C	
Year 3	3A	n/a	n/a	
Year 4	4A	4B	4C	
Year 5	5C	5C	5C	
Projected Year 6 teacher assessment*	5	5	5	5
Actual result	5	5	5	5

*An average child should attain Level 4 by the end of Key Stage 2

Katie’s experience of school was clearly positive. She was very forthcoming in discussing school visits and opportunities which she found challenging. It was almost as if she was ‘coasting’ through Year 6. In this sense CU courses and family activities were providing additional learning opportunities which she needed to complement her formal curriculum attainment. A good example was her visits to the Science Museum, her ‘favourite’ museum, which she had visited three times, once with school and twice with her grandparents. She enjoyed the active learning opportunities and she explained that she learnt something new every time she went. The CU courses played a similar role in stimulating her active engagement with creative and scientific learning.

Katie was a late starter in attending CU courses, introduced to them during Year 5 through her friends at school. She had completed four full activities, including the Egyptian Art course. She was proud of her certificates which she kept in a folder at home. She opted for CU courses which drew on her creative talents and interest in science. She spoke with genuine interest and enthusiasm about all the courses she had taken.

- Egyptian Art:

Where she made Egyptian artefacts, which were clay-fired and then painted. She explained how this opportunity was never available at school: ‘We don’t have the time.’

- Puppets and Controllable Vehicles:
Where she designed examples of both to optimise movement, constructed them in a workshop and then evaluated each other's work. It was 'great fun' although she admitted that her design was flawed, she could 'see how to improve it'.
- Nature Detectives:
'Helped us to think about our outdoors. It helped us in science - it looked interesting and made you take notice of the environment and what was living on your doorstep'.

Summary: Katie

The Three As

Attendance: School and CU attendance were both exemplary.

Attitude: Katie was a self motivated learner, acutely aware of her strengths and interests she opted an instrumental attitude to learning across a range of different sites. Her desire to gain entry to her chosen Grammar School and to effectively disregard her SATs performance is evidence of a girl realising her potential and what it takes to fulfil it.

Achievement/attainment: Katie was very able, achieving Level 5 in English and Maths a full year before her SATs.

For Katie the CU courses offered a means of further improvement and of extending her range of interests. She passed her 11+ exam and her entry examinations for the Girls Grammar School she had applied to. She was looking forward to starting there in September 2009, her only concern is finding time to continue with her outside interests when she is balancing the heavy demands of the school curriculum.

Billy

Billy is one of nine children and is 9 years old. He has four younger siblings, one of whom has Down's syndrome. The head teacher explained that school presents great difficulties for him as 'conforming is something he doesn't do easily'. She explained that he was one of the school's most challenging children whose parents did not always know where he was and what he was doing 'a feral child with very few boundaries'. The head teacher described him as a child who had 'a lot of front' but very low self-esteem. She outlined one occasion when she was in his classroom during circle time and he could not contribute and clung onto her arm saying 'I can't say it'. His class teacher explained that he has a reading age of 6/7 and his literacy and numeracy levels were well below aged related expectations. His Maths level is currently 2C and his literacy level is 1A/2C. The main challenge is to engage him as he can be 'very flighty' mainly she feels through lack of sleep due to an absence of routine at home.

However Billy has had a much more settled year at school and the head feels that there are various factors related to this. Firstly he has a new class teacher, an Advanced Skills teacher who has established a good relationship with him. He has spent most of the time in the classroom this year rather than standing outside which had been his previous experience. Secondly, the head believes that offering him opportunities like the CU and the involvement of his parents in the celebration event has allowed him to feel more positive about his skills and potential than in previous years. His class teacher said 'this year has been about him settling down and feeling confident that he can achieve'.

This was affirmed by observation of him during the session. He was attentive throughout and worked quickly and skillfully, with no behaviour to suggest him as a challenging student. He picked up the techniques more quickly than many of the others. It was commented that he had not found it difficult 'He succeeded at it. It was hands-on...his way of learning'. The greater level of independence and freedom suited him. He said in the course of discussion with him that he had found 'the cookery stuff easy. I liked it all'. He had particularly liked making the apple and beef burgers and the chicken tikka. Billy was keen to mention that one of the reasons he had enjoyed it so much was 'we didn't have to write and all that'. This different learning experience was clearly a liberation for him. He was very proud of cooking for his parents when they came in - 'I put a towel over my arm like a proper waiter and made spag boll and smoothies. My Mum said it were really nice. She loved both of them'. His teacher said 'it is difficult for him to be noticed at home' and that he struggles to be heard, and also commented that his father 'kicks against authority' and that his contact with school is often tense and defensive so this was a golden opportunity for him to engage in dialogue with staff about Billy in a positive way. It was mentioned that the parents in the community often found it hard to praise their children but the event was full of comments such as 'This is fantastic.....aren't you great!'

Billy's class teacher felt that CU was an opportunity for him to 'experience a different kind of learning – a hands-on learning which suits him'. She feared that the gap between Billy and his peer group would grow in terms of literacy and numeracy and said there is 'often a stigma attached to his learning' Therefore the need to 'prevent the disengagement from learning' was imperative. In her view he needs to experience different kinds of learning and learning styles and success to 'keep a torchlight glimmering at the end'. This is particularly important as his parents and some of his older siblings do not work. After each visit to the college Billy was very taken by the mechanics section and talked about it with her a lot. She feels that if he could do something like this 'would be his everything' and the sessions at the CU have 'given him a glimpse of what could be in the future'.

The CU has presented Billy with an opportunity to succeed and to share that success with his family.

Jane

Jane is in Year 5 and is 9 years old. She is one of five in her family. Her reading age is a little below age related expectations and her Maths and literacy are levels 3C. Her teacher

commented that her writing, reading and Maths fluctuate depending on her levels of confidence. This was the reason for encouraging her to take part in CU. She needed encouragement to do this as according to her teacher 'leaving the school and the village and going to the college was a big deal'. Jane herself said that she was anxious the first time. Her village is 15 minutes outside the town but to Jane the trip was an enormous step 'We went on a coach and it was a long, long way and the building was very big'. This underscores the importance of the vision of the local CU to enable children from such communities to see places on their doorstep. The teacher felt that it would be really beneficial for her to see that she can cope and flourish in a different environment. During the session I [the evaluator] observed she was confidently taking part and helping others along too. On one occasion she demonstrated to another girl how to cut up the fruit saying 'Watch I can do it now'. Her teacher commented that Jane is a generous learner 'She is good at pairing up and is very kind and attentive and often asks 'What do you think?' but doesn't offer her own views often or show that she can do something and that to see her take the lead is an important step for her'.

Her teacher feels that Jane's confidence has grown and her success has helped her speak up more and contribute more in her classroom. Jane herself wanted to attend the cookery module as 'I keep watching it on TV and would like to do it myself'. In the discussion group with two other boys she explained some of the different techniques such as 'claw and bridge'. She demonstrated how to hold your hand in the shape of a bridge when cutting an apple and an onion and said: 'I showed my Mum this when I got home'. She enjoyed working with David and Michelle [two other children] and developed a greater confidence about interacting with them as time went on 'I got used to these different people and to asking them for help'. She had been impressed with the kitchens and with the fact that one of the module leaders was a woman and had worked in a restaurant. The glimpse she had gained of cookery on the television had become concrete and she could meet people for whom this was a job and a real passion. She explained that she would like to continue to cook and to 'go there when I am older to learn to do more stuff'.

The invitation to parents to come in had given her much pleasure. Her teacher commented that 'an hour with someone who was important to her' was prized as the household is busy and crowded.

Jack and Jessica

Jessica and Jack are Year 6 pupils who had shared three CU visits to London, to the local dockyards and to a village in a Yorkshire valley to practise sketching in the landscape under guidance from a local artist. Jessica, lively and articulate had remarkable recall of the visit to London, describing the buildings and the sensation of congestion and busyness of the capital city. She was able to evoke how she had felt and tell others around the table of things they had said or done. Jessica remembered information on the day and surprised the CU Manager by her knowledge. She listened distractedly to the other children and seemed impatient to contribute. She spoke about the train journey and remembered other passengers. On the second occasion when I [the evaluator] met with the group, Jessica talked about her family and her sisters at secondary school. She was anticipating her own imminent transition to secondary school and was impatient with talk

about a field trip to Yorkshire. She was eager to ask me [the evaluator] questions about Cambridge and seemed ready for broader horizons.

Jack was restless and constantly moving in his seat and was expressive and alert. He listened intently to the contributions of others and settled well to contributing in the pauses or in response to a particular question. He would sometimes appear to think carefully before responding had good recall regarding his trips out. He seemed to particularly enjoy the visit to the local docks. He recalled things out of sequence but in remarkable detail, sometimes quoting the facts told him by their guide for the visit. He showed a piece of writing that had been inspired by the trip to the docks and was keen to read it aloud. On a second meeting he was able to reflect back on his anticipation of the visit to a Yorkshire village and compare it with the reality. 'I thought it would be boring but it wasn't. I thought it would be near but it took ages to get there. I saw a Red Kite and drew a tree. It was windy and the tree was moving.' There was a moment when Jack had an exchange with another boy, in which they tried to recall the sights along a ridge that they had walked. The exchange was animated and focused.

These children, and their peers in the group, were a delight to meet. They had energy and an enthusiasm to talk, which was endearing. The visits had evidently made an impression on them and provided them with inspiration and information. They appeared to consume the experiences and appreciated the opportunities. They left an impression of isolated children who benefited from additional contact with outsiders. It is hard to assess the impact on them as individuals unfamiliar but it was clear that the trips beyond the school environment were valuable and worthwhile. Their oracy and literacy skills had been exercised in the enactment and recall of their experiences.

Pasha and Soraiya are both vocal and confident, unanimous in their enthusiasm for the provision of activities after school. Soraiya is composed and self-confident, Pasha keen to enjoy a laugh and a bit of banter with his friends in the group. Pasha is articulate and unafraid to air his feelings. Soraiya is more inclined to listen with careful attention to others round the table. Pasha has participated in a range of CU activities after school and in the recent half term holidays. As a keen footballer he is able to speak at length about learning new ball skills during one half-term. He had also attended a choir and a kite-making course. The previous year he had made face-masks during the school holidays. Soraiya didn't always participate in after school activities but was currently enjoying a cookery class on Thursdays, preparing pastry and making gingerbread. She explained that her mother was too busy with her sisters 'to tell me how to do stuff like that' but adds that 'she has promised me that I can show her what I've done.' She particularly values the resources and instruction and the time she has with 'the teacher'. Pasha had had conversations at home about forthcoming CU activities and his Dad agreed which one he could join. That his Mum collected him after the clubs caused considerable laughter around the table.

Both Pasha and Soraiya's parents, kept in touch though a termly newsletter detailing forthcoming activities, were happy to pay the costs involved.

Sometimes the clubs were led by staff members but often they were run by skilled adults otherwise unattached to the school. The local CU was clearly offering the children additional opportunities and helping to teach them new skills and improve existing skills.

Bradley and Melissa are two Year 6 pupils have both participated extensively in CU activities. Bradley, quiet and reserved, Melissa confident, and cheerful, forthcoming and friendly. Bradley thinks carefully before answering questions, responding politely to all questions although needing encouragement to recall information and to embellish his account of participation in after school hours activities. Melissa is able to cite recalls several examples after school activities she has taken part in including Information Communication Technology (ICT) workshops, puppet-making courses, drama and weaving. She often chooses activities because her friends are taking them. Bradley's high points were the football club and a drama week during the holidays. With encouragement he was able to describe in detail creating a drama performance with his friends, which involved creating a story, designing costumes and a backdrop and writing a short script. The performances had taken place with audiences comprised of friends and family and had clearly been a memorable success.

Melissa was able to give examples of ways in which she had been helped in her school work, for example, when she had become more confident on the computer and could now use it independently on occasions. This was important because the teacher was often too busy to help her.

Sarah

The following portrait is based on observations this year and last year of Sarah in CU activities, discussions with her on two occasions about her long involvement in CU, an observation of her in an ICT activity and a discussion with her classroom teacher and also a discussion with her mother.

Sarah is in Year 6 and is 11 years old. She is a Children's University veteran having taken part in CU activities since Year 3. She has twin brothers in Year 5 who also take part regularly in CU activities. Over the years she has experienced the whole range of what the local CU can offer, including pottery, netball and art. Sarah has a statement of special educational need to cater for her complex needs. Sarah suffered a stroke at birth which left her with haemiplegia on the left side. In addition she has a heart problem and is on the autistic spectrum. She has undergone several operations on her left arm which have at times led to long spells in hospital. Sarah is a bright girl who, according to her teacher, will achieve a Level 5 in Maths at the end of Year 6 in the SATS.

Sarah has been drawn particularly to the sports CU activities to try to develop her strength 'to get better at running'. She revealed that at CU she has to push herself physically more than at school in for example rounders, 'At school I am allowed to ask or choose someone to do the running for me. At CU I don't know the others as well so I have to do it myself.' She thinks all the CU activities over the years have enabled her to 'do more things myself'.

Her learning has been supported by a teaching assistant funded from the CU budget.

The art activities according to Sarah have enabled her to 'think of my own ideas' and to develop the confidence to experiment and try different techniques. In one art course she said she had 'developed a different style of art, a Quentin Blake style, a more accurate, neater style'. When asked how this had come about she explained that the tutor had brought in some Quentin Blake drawings for her to look at and she was inspired by this. This element of personalisation and attention to her individual needs made her feel special. She recounted an art competition she had entered independently after the art course and felt really proud of the art work she had produced. Her mother said that the art course had really extended her knowledge and appreciation of art. She would talk of Monet and home and be 'all knowing now!' The entries for the art competition had prompted a great discussion in the home 'Which one did I like best? Which one is the best? Which one is the best for the competition?' Her confidence about working with different materials has also increased as the tutor had encouraged her to work with chalks, pencils and painting. Her mother feels that the individual attention during the art course and the need for her to experiment and move outside what she knows was very beneficial to her as due to her autistic tendencies she can 'can get very het up if there isn't an answer as she isn't free with her imagination'.

Her teacher feels that a real value of CU for Sarah has been the opportunity over a number of years to meet different adults and to adapt to their different ways. Her teacher described the difficult transition period when Sarah meets a 'new' adult as 'a testing time for Sarah'. CU has enabled her to make these transitions and her teacher believes that the experience of 'coping and holding her own in different environments' will enable a smoother transition to secondary school than might have been the case.

The choice of activities within the local CU has been important for Sarah as each time she has been able to find something to enjoy, 'a taster of new things'. Her mother believes her involvement has led to a slow development of her confidence over the years. She now sees people in the town whom she has met at CU activities and according to her mother is delighted that they know her and acknowledge her. Building these contacts across the town has been important for her confidence. Her class teacher reflected that she had become a class councilor this year for the first time and had been a 'bright little spark at meetings'.