Queen Margaret Children’s University

INTRODUCTION: AIMS AND BACKGROUND

Queen Margaret Children’s University (QMCU) aims to:

- promote social mobility by providing high quality, exciting and innovative learning activities and experiences outside normal school hours to children aged 5-14 (P1 to S2) and
- engage the wider communities as learning partners in the realisation of this.
- respond to the fact that children need a range of different opportunities and that not all learning needs to be school focused.
- recognise and celebrate children’s learning successes by rewarding them with a ‘Passport to Learning’ which helps record their participation in activities; helping them build their learning experience by encouraging them to work through bronze, silver and gold certificated levels; and providing the opportunity for them take part in an impressive graduation ceremony at Queen Margaret University.

Aligned with the Curriculum for Excellence Queen Margaret Children’s University aims to:

- raise aspirations;
- enrich the learning experience;
- boost achievement and
- foster a love of learning, so that young people can make the most of their abilities and interests, regardless of the background into which they were born.

Widening Access

Although open to all, QMCU aims particularly to reach children and young people facing socio-economic and educational disadvantage through the promotion of activities in areas of deprivation. QMCU also recognises that different children respond to different methods of learning. Children who may not be high academic achievers or lack parental encouragement can be successful learners by taking part in a range of fun, interactive activities within the school or community. The Children’s University has been shown to help children overcome disadvantage to become proud and confident learners and in general it helps young people do things they might never have thought of before.

Background in England and Scotland

The Children’s University is recognised as a highly successful learning model for children in England with 70 local CU centres running across the country. Scotland has two children’s universities – one in Glasgow, and the other run by Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, the latter being the only Children’s University in the east of Scotland. The project was
established at QMU in 2014. The first CU graduation ceremony was held at Queen Margaret University in January 2015. The event saw approximately 100 children take part in the ceremony.

CURRENT ACTIVITY - East Lothian and Midlothian

Queen Margaret Children's University has been working with both primary and secondary schools and learning destinations throughout both Midlothian and East Lothian and has now secured partnerships with schools in Haddington, Tranent, Musselburgh, Dunbar and Prestonpans (Cluster meetings happening Feb and March), Dalkeith, Newtongrange, Lasswade and Penicuik.

- Active partnership schools: 27
- Total number of active pupils: 1485 (911 East Lothian 574 Midlothian)

Expected growth

- by June 2015
  - total active schools to increase from 30 to 40
  - total active pupils to increase from 1485 to 2250
- by December 2015
  - total active schools to increase from 40 to 50
  - total active pupils to increase from 2250 to 2750

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND DESTINATIONS

Queen Margaret University’s outreach team has validated just over 200 learning destinations to date and there are over 500 validated learning activities listed against these learning destinations on the QMCU website for pupils to choose from.

Thirty of the learning destinations are school partners offering a wide range of in-school activities delivered via either breakfast, lunch time or after-school clubs. Activities include: French club, homework club, craft clubs, sports clubs and subjects as varied as STEM Club, archery, Japanese, computer coding, orchestra etc.

The remaining 270 learning destinations include sports centres, libraries, music schools, youth clubs and both local and national businesses such B&Q, Dynamic Earth, Scottish Mining Museum and Scottish Seabird Centre. Activities include a wealth of sporting activities such as swimming, dance and football etc. as well as activities such as construction skills workshops, music lessons, library reading challenges and treasure/info trails.

HOW CAN THE QMCU HELP CREATE A SUCCESSFUL YOUNG WORKFORCE?

- provides an accreditation framework which rewards children for learning outside of normal school hours.
• encourages young people to foster a love of learning and motivates them to become active learners as they move throughout their teenage years.
• recognises that some children respond to a different learning approach and creates a unique way of recognising and rewarding individuals for getting involved in new things.
• targets children from disadvantaged backgrounds and encourages both them and their families get involved in learning experiences.
• offers a different approach to learning and targets children who may not be highly academic, helping them to learn in different ways.
• encourages children to build their credits in their own time (voluntary basis) which means that their success is a more personal achievement.
• inspires children to participate and to actively seek out learning opportunities.
• creates positive learning groups/communities and encourages children, parents, families, teachers, schools and learning destinations to celebrate children's learning successes.
• encourages parents and carers to help children achieve learning goals thereby bringing families together in learning and fostering a culture of learning, recognition and reward within families.
• encourages children to develop enquiring minds and skills that can be used in later life to assist with educational and career attainment.
• helps children develop into responsible and enquiring citizens who have the ability to learn in different ways and to grow as responsible, educated citizens.
• creates the basis for the development of open minded young people who have developed a culture of learning and will hopefully have aspirations to contribute positively to work and society.

USEFUL LINKS

Queen Margaret Children’s University graduation press release: http://www.qmu.ac.uk/marketing/press_releases/First-Childrens-University-graduation-takes-place-in-east-Scotland.htm

Queen Margaret Children’s University film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr_bHaHTYKA

The Children’s University http://www.childrensuniversity.co.uk/

THE ACADEMIES: The South East Scotland Academies Partnership

The South East Scotland Academies Partnership is a project which is recognised by the Scottish Funding Council as one which is delivering real results for Scotland’s young people (aged 15 – 18 years) in terms of skills development, and educational and career opportunities. The unique collaborative model (involving a university, colleges, schools, local authorities and industry partners) prepares young people for real jobs; provides a seamless
transition between school, college, university and work; develops industry knowledge and improves skills development and employability.

THE AIM

The focus of the ground-breaking collaboration is to help young people maximise their educational opportunities and develop transferable skills; smooth the transition between school, college, university and employment; and support the development of Scotland’s key growth industries. By equipping students with the right skills, knowledge and attitude, the Academies project can assist in developing a young workforce which will help raise standards in some of Scotland’s key economic priority areas. The project now provides outstanding learning opportunities to pupils in East Lothian, Midlothian, Edinburgh, Scottish Borders and West Lothian.

THE ACADEMIES

Four academies exist:

- **Hospitality and Tourism Academy** (first intake 2013)
- **Health and Social Care Academy** (first intake 2014)
- **Food Science and Nutrition** (first intake 2014)
- **Creative Industries Academy** (first intake 2014)

The full academy programme is part-time and delivered over a two-year period (while students are still in their S5 and S6 at school). The student commitment to the academy is over and above their normal school curriculum. For all of the academies, classes are delivered at Queen Margaret University and Edinburgh College/Borders College/West Lothian College and for some academies, also within schools.

GROUND-BREAKING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

The Academies are run by the South East Scotland Academies Partnership - a ground-breaking partnership project spearheaded by Queen Margaret University and Edinburgh College, supported by Borders College, West Lothian College, and local authorities in East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian and Scottish Borders.

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT

A major success of the academy project has been the high-level commitment of industry partners. These specialist partners are instrumental in exposing the young people to the workings of the industry by providing placement opportunities, hands-on practical experience, and offering an insight into specialist fields. Many hotels, which have committed to supporting the Hospitality and Tourism Academy, can clearly see the benefits for their involvement – the opportunity to help shape a ready-made source of young local talent equipped with the right skills and knowledge to hit the ground running when entering the hospitality and tourism industry.

Industry partners can provide industry visits and placement/practical learning opportunities for academy students.

**An example of industry partners include:**
• **Food Science and Nutrition Academy:** Nairns Oatcakes, Scottish Food and Drink Federation, Skills Development Scotland, National Skills Academy of Food and Drink, Scottish Business in the Community, Global Science, College Development Network.

• **Health and Social Care:** various care homes, NHS Royal Infirmary, Western General, Social Services, Support Works, Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre.

• **Creative Industries Academy:** BBC Scotland, Aye Write, Creative & Cultural Skills Scotland, Creative Edinburgh Ltd, Creative Skillset Academy (Scotland), Forth One, Young Scot, Royal Lyceum.

• **Hospitality and Tourism Academy:** Archiefield House, Best Western Capital, Doubletree by Hilton, Fraser Suites, Jurys Inn, Macdonald Hotels, Marriott, Mercat Tours, Mercure, Café St Honore, Novotel, Portland City, Premier Inn, Restaurant Martin Wishart, Roxburgh Hotel, Skibo Castle, Visit Scotland.

**WIDENING PARTICIPATION**

Students wishing to participate in the project go through a formal application and interview process – entry is competitive. The Academies also aim to target students from non-traditional backgrounds and those who may not be high academic achievers but have enthusiasm and other talents.

**ACADEMIES GROWTH**

In just two years, the acclaimed academies project has grown from 34 young people from three East Lothian schools, to approximately 360 pupils from 38 schools in Edinburgh, East and Midlothian and the Scottish Borders. The project has recently partnered with West Lothian Council to extend opportunities to schools in the area.

**QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AND CAREER OPTIONS**

After successful completion of the full two-year academy programme, students will be presented with a range of excellent opportunities to progress into further or higher education or go directly into employment. Successful completion also results in students gaining a recognised qualification to add to their CV. Students on certain academies can gain direct access onto the second year of degree courses at Queen Margaret University eg. Hospitality and Tourism Academy students who successfully complete the two year programme can leave school and articulate straight into second year of the BA (Hons) International Hospitality and Tourism Management.

**HOW WILL THE ACADEMIES HELP CREATE A DYNAMIC YOUNG WORKFORCE?**

It develops young people:

• who are better informed about their own futures and have an insight into specific industries
• who have acquired relevant skills, knowledge and the right attitude to contribute positively to the growth and development of key industries in Scotland.
• who have relevant qualifications and industry experience to continue in education or enter the jobs market, and can choose to move seamlessly, at different stages in their lives, between education and career.
• who benefit from accelerated learning opportunities and the acquisition of transferable skills.
• who are acutely aware of opportunities within Scotland’s growth industries and who are developing an understanding of, and a passion for, these key areas.

**Further information**

For further details on the Academies programme and the South East Scotland Academies partnership visit: [http://southeastscotlandacademies.org/](http://southeastscotlandacademies.org/)