



The Brilliant Club

Case For
Support



Breaking the link between a young
person's background and access
to life-changing higher education

Hello

The UK has some of the best universities in the world. Their research is ground-breaking, their facilities – from sports halls to art galleries – are world-class, their libraries are awe-inspiring. Their graduates often become leaders in their fields: journalists, judges, engineers, politicians and civil servants. Shockingly, the intellectual riches kept in these institutions, and the opportunities which sit alongside them, are not evenly distributed to pupils progressing through our education system.

For example, only 1 in 50 of the most disadvantaged 18-year olds in England progress to highly-selective universities, compared to 1 in 4 of the most advantaged.

The challenge is relatively easy to identify, even if its causes are multiple and overlapping. Solutions, on the other hand, are harder to come by. Harder still if those solutions are to be sustainable and scalable, reaching the rural and coastal areas which have often been deprived of help in supporting pupils to progress to highly-selective universities. Harder again, if the solutions are to start young; to reach pupils and their parents while they are still at primary school and to normalise conversations about university.

The Brilliant Club's approach is unique. It does not seek to lay the blame for the current situation at the doors of hard-working teachers or university staff who are acutely aware of the inequality and committed to resolving it. Instead, we seek to mobilise the research community of

our universities – typically PhD students and PhD graduates – to share their expertise with state schools. We run programmes that seek to utilise the subject expertise of researchers to the mutual benefits of school and universities, and in doing so enhance the chances of underrepresented pupils progressing to university.

As you read this document, I hope that you see our commitment to the foundations that make such programmes viable: financial sustainability, excellent logistics (so important when teachers already have challenges with workload) and a sector-leading approach to research and impact. These may seem dry or even transactional. At The Brilliant Club, we believe them to be essential, but we also never lose sight of the magic that they underpin; the moment when an expert – perhaps the world-expert in their field – shares their passion for research with a pupil in one of our partner schools. Time and again we have seen how that interaction can transform a pupil's attitude to study at university, while simultaneously building their academic knowledge and confidence, enhancing their chances of applying, progressing and being ready to start at university.

Thank you for your interest in the charity.

Yours,
Dr Chris Wilson
CEO, The Brilliant Club



"I always loved learning, but coming from a state comprehensive school, first-generation background, higher education wasn't on my radar while I was at secondary school. One day in 2014, my teacher called us all to a meeting about a new opportunity called The Scholars Programme. I still remember when our tutor told us that only a few people in the world knew about his speciality. I definitely think the experience was the most important factor in my eventual decision to apply to Keble College, Oxford, where I've now spent the happiest two years of my life studying English and Italian. Collaborating with the charity as part of my work with Oxford First-Gen students' society has been a real highlight for this reason. I can't thank the programme enough for giving me that all-important first push."

Shona Galt, The Scholars Programme Alumna, President of Oxford First-Gen Society 2018-19 and Student at Keble College, Oxford



The Need

In the UK today, a young person's chances of accessing life-changing higher education remain linked to their socioeconomic background.

Whilst there has been an increase in progression to university over time, research shows that there are deep-rooted inequalities in accessing the most selective institutions, which are renowned for their positive impact on young people's futures.

England

Only **1 in 50** of the most disadvantaged pupils progress, compared to **1 in 4** of the most advantaged.

(UCAS Multiple Equality Measure)

Scotland

Only **7%** of pupils from the most deprived areas progress, compared to **26%** of pupils from the least deprived areas.

(Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)

Wales

Only **4%** of young people from low participation areas progress, compared to **22%** of pupils from high participation areas.

(POLAR4 – Participation of Local Areas)

Northern Ireland

Only **2%** of young people from low participation areas progress, compared to **10%** of pupils from high participation areas.

(POLAR4 – Participation of Local Areas)

These progression rates evidence the existence of barriers to fair university access which perpetuate cycles of inequality, underrepresentation and disadvantage within society.

Our Mission

The Brilliant Club exists to increase the number of pupils from underrepresented backgrounds that progress to highly-selective universities.

We do this by mobilising the PhD community to share its academic expertise with state schools.

The Difference It Makes

The Brilliant Club aims to break the link between a young person's background and their life chances by supporting them to:

Develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to thrive in their studies

Apply and progress to highly-selective universities

Research shows that this will widen access to long-term benefits which enable young people to realise their potential:

Learn from leading academics undertaking cutting-edge research

Progress into competitive and influential career paths

Achieve higher average earnings

Build networks which support personal and professional development

By closing this university access gap, we will work towards creating a fairer society where a young person's life chances are not determined by their background.



How We Make A Difference

In pursuit of our mission, we bring together a community of over 600 researchers across the UK, who are committed to fair access to university. We deliver two core programmes which mobilise the researcher community to engage with pupils and teachers in state schools: The Scholars Programme and Researchers in Schools.

“The university visits were excellent. The day was well organised and informative. The children were eager to get started. After the visit, one of the children stated, “I am excited for my future now!”
Teacher, Scotland

The Scholars Programme

The programme is designed to

- Support pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to progress to highly-selective universities
- Work collaboratively to close the gap in university access
- Develop researchers' teaching skills and public engagement

The Scholars Programme piloted in 2011 in one school in London. Since then, 58,503 pupils aged 9-17 have taken part from state schools across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We work with:

15,000
Pupils across
the UK

800 State
Schools

Over 40
Partner
Universities

The Journey



“I really enjoyed the trip we had and it really inspired me. I have never seen such a beautiful place before.”
Pupil, England

“Working with the pupils to teach them about Celtic Mythology (something they had never really encountered before) was both fun and challenging. It really fired in me a passion for teaching. It was truly one of the best experiences of my life thus far.”
PhD Tutor, Northern Ireland

“The experience has enhanced my child's understanding of higher education. He has started to work out what he needs to achieve his goals in the future.”
Parent, Wales

Researchers in Schools (RIS)

Researchers in Schools (RIS) piloted in 2014, with support from the Department for Education. RIS is a three-year programme for PhD graduates who want to become classroom teachers and is delivered in partnership with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers in England. Participants have one day of protected time per week to work towards the Research Leader in Education (RLE) Award, designed by experts to optimise the unique skill set of PhD graduates for the benefit of pupils and schools.

We support RIS participants to become excellent classroom teachers and work towards the RIS aims:

- To champion university access
- To increase subject expertise
- To promote education research



Year

2

We support RIS participants to complete their Newly-Qualified Teacher (NQT) year. Participants create and pilot an education research project, underpinned by Master's level training.

“Uni Pathways has really expanded my knowledge and allowed me to be involved in amazing experiences that I would not be able to participate in otherwise, such as visiting a university. Additionally, it allowed me to refine my mathematical skills in physics.” **Uni Pathways Pupil**

Year

1

We recruit RIS participants to train with a regional provider and work towards Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) whilst teaching in their school. We support participants to deliver Uni Pathways, a series of tutorials on courses based on their PhD, to six pupils to increase their university readiness.

Year

3

We support RIS participants to build on their expertise and experience to refine their teaching practice. Participants train other teachers to deliver their research project, supported by additional leadership training.



RIS alumni become part of a community dedicated to making a difference to pupils' lives as classroom teachers and school leaders

“The initial attraction was that it is a bespoke programme for PhD graduates – it felt like the programme was designed for me. To be part of the education research community was important to me as well. I want to influence the way maths is taught in schools. When I broke it down, RIS was the only route for me.” **RIS Participant**

“I have been really impressed with our RIS teacher's progress this year. Not only does he continue to add impact to the department and to lessons within his subject, but he is also contributing to life beyond his classroom, both pastorally, and by focusing on careers with older pupils.” **Headteacher**



How We Measure Impact

Key Pupil Outcomes

Long-Term:

Increase the number of pupils from underrepresented backgrounds progressing to highly-selective universities

Intermediate:

Increase pupils' university readiness by developing their knowledge, skills and confidence

Independent Evaluations with Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

For the last three years, UCAS has found The Scholars Programme to have a statistically significant impact on progression to highly-selective universities.



For typical groups of 100 pupils matched for a range of characteristics, including ethnicity, postcode and prior attainment at GCSE, we expect **56** Scholars Programme alumni to progress, compared to only **30** pupils who have not completed the programme.

Pupil Targeting

All pupils enrolled on our programmes attend state schools, alumni from which are underrepresented at highly-selective universities. In addition, at least **55%** of pupils must meet one or more of our targeting criteria:

Eligible for free school meals

No parental history of higher education

Deprivation according to postcode

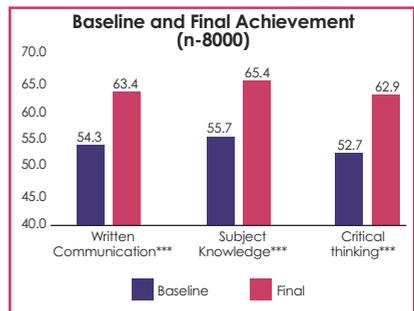
Monitoring and Evaluation

We are committed to a rigorous and consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation. We have a dedicated Research and Impact department, which was first established in 2015 and brings together a team of social scientists who work to measure, understand and strengthen the impact of our programmes.

During The Scholars Programme and Uni Pathways (delivered through Researchers in Schools), we support pupils to develop their university readiness, focusing on key competencies linked to academic achievement and university progression: written communication, subject knowledge and critical thinking. We measure pupils' progress in these competencies using baseline and final assignments which are marked on a university-style grading scheme, where 50-59 is a 2.2. grade and 60-69 is a 2.1 grade.

In addition, we support the development of pupils' university knowledge and self-confidence to progress to and succeed at university; and deeper learning skills which tap into pupils' self-perceptions as learners. We measure the effect of our programmes using standardised self-report surveys.

The Scholars Programme National Impact 2019/20



External Evaluation with the University of Cambridge

In line with our strategy focused on pupil outcomes, we have commissioned the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge to carry out an external evaluation between 2018-2020. The evaluation consists of a review of our research and impact work to date and a randomised-controlled trial (RCT) assessing the impact of our programmes on pupils' intermediate university readiness outcomes.

Supporting The Brilliant Club

Between 2019-22, we need £2,025,000 to support our work with over 45,000 pupils across the UK

Since its beginnings, the charity has made financial sustainability a priority and has consistently maintained a high percentage of income earned through programme delivery (86% in 2018).

This includes a contract from the Department for Education to deliver Researchers in Schools and contributions towards programme costs from partner universities and schools for The Scholars Programme.



Our fundraising strategy is designed to fill the gap between the costs of delivery and programme income. A priority for the charity is to ensure that contributions towards costs are reasonable for schools within the context of budget constraints. Funding makes a significant difference to our ability to expand provision across the UK, to innovate and strengthen our programmes and impact.

In addition to core funding to support the charity's activities across the UK, we are seeking funding for:

The Scholars Programme

We work across the UK and current funding priorities include Scotland, Wales, the North of England, East Anglia, the Midlands and London. We have a strong track record of delivering regional projects and welcome conversations around funders' geographical priorities and interests

Research and Impact

We welcome funding to support this vital function to understand and demonstrate the impact of our work to partner schools, universities, funders and to share research with the wider sector to improve fair access beyond our direct beneficiaries

Friends of The Brilliant Club

We believe in the power of networks and the importance of engaging with all of our supporters to collaborate on our mission.

We would like to invite you to become part of our Friends of The Brilliant Club network, which provides opportunities for everyone interested in the charity to come together, share ideas and support our mission.

You can sign up to the Friends mailing list on our website: thebrilliantclub.org.



Contact Us

We would love to hear from you. For further information and to discuss supporting The Brilliant Club, please email Maddy Maloney at maddy.maloney@thebrilliantclub.org or call 0207 939 1946.

Thank you for your interest in The Brilliant Club's mission.

Our Partner Schools



The Scholars Programme



Researchers in Schools



The Scholars Programme and Researchers in Schools



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