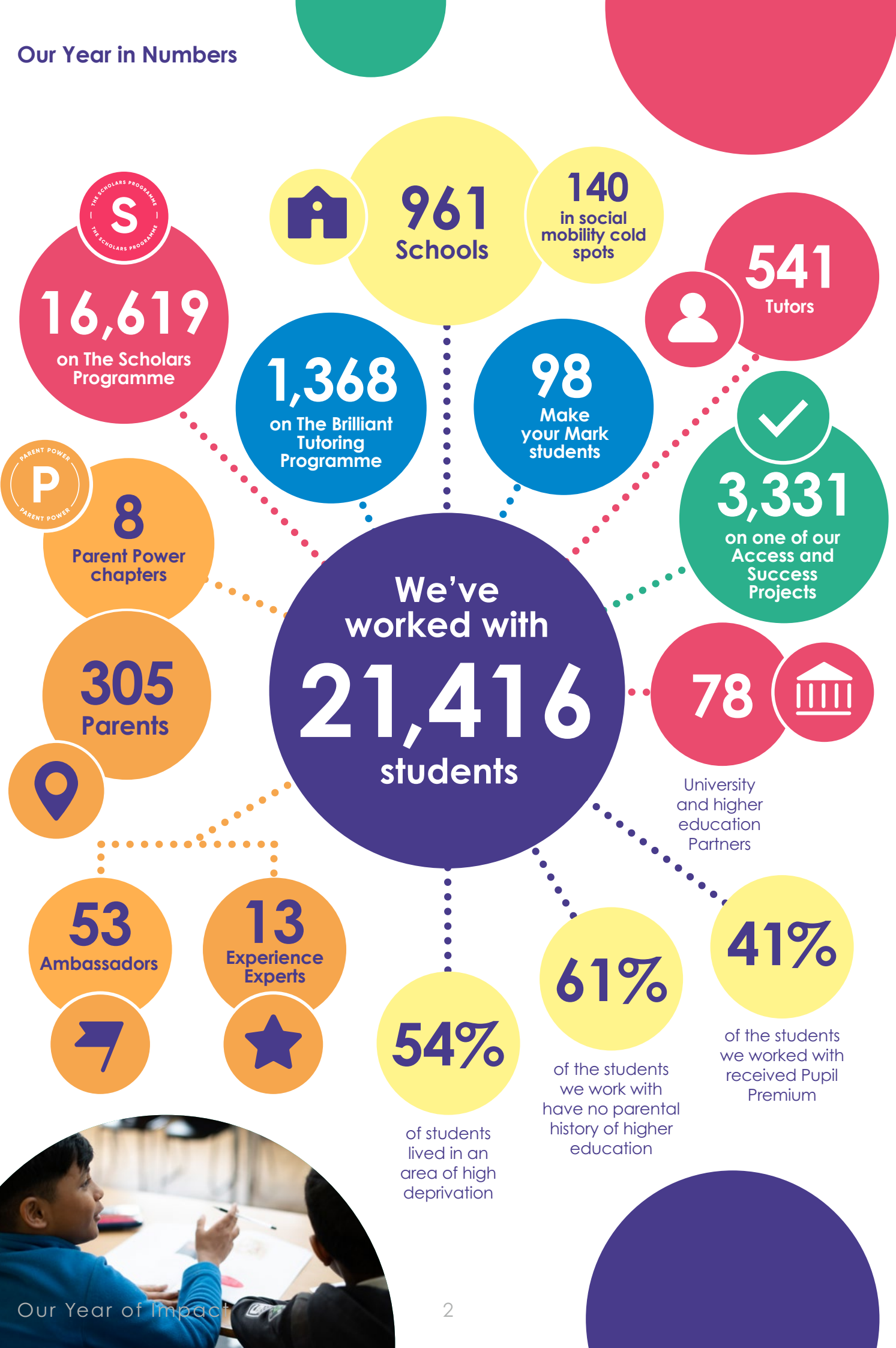




# Our Year of Impact

The Brilliant Club  
2022/23



Introduction

I am pleased to welcome you to our Annual Impact Report for the 2022/23 academic year.

This has been a wonderful year for our Brilliant Club community. We have mobilised **541 researchers** to support **21,416 students** in **961 schools** across the UK, working alongside our **78** higher education partners. We've also worked with **over 300 parents** through Parent Power, **and 53 student ambassadors** from our alumni community.

This year, Key Stage 2 students across the country contemplated whether we can prevent dementia and wrote assignments on the human ability to trust robots, while Key Stage 4 students debated censorship, and decoded hidden messages in works of art. Parent leaders have proposed better work experience opportunities, and more accessible transport options in their local areas. As well as this, our ambassadors shared their own stories with schools and the university sector, and inspired others to join our club.

But this year has not been without its challenges for less advantaged students and their families. This year we've seen a significant rise in the number of students eligible for free school meals, which now stands at almost **1 in 4 young people** in our schools. This is especially worrying when we consider that less advantaged students, including students eligible for free school meals, are now **18.8 months** behind their most advantaged peers by the time they reach their GCSEs. What this means, concretely, is that students from the least advantaged backgrounds are not able to access the same opportunities as their peers: less advantaged students currently have a **2 in 100 chance of going to the most competitive universities, compared with 28 in 100 for the most advantaged** (UCAS, 2023). This means that they are nearly 14 times more likely to miss out on competitive university study.

On top of all this, we've seen schools, universities, families, and students face funding shortages and budgetary constraints as the cost-of-living crisis lingers. We know that these financial issues are having a long-term impact on educational opportunity. In September, for

example, we worked with Public First to poll parents' attitudes towards university, so that we could better understand the challenges that families are facing across the UK. We know, from this polling, that parents want there to be a place at university for every student who wants to go, but that the cost-of-living still weighs heavy on their minds when considering their child's own path.

In the face of these new challenges, The Brilliant Club continues its efforts to improve access routes to higher education and support for students when they get there. This year, we have had exciting news about our impact, and have published evidence showing that our flagship Scholars Programme not only improves access to competitive universities, but also has a real and positive impact on the GCSE scores of students who take our courses. This is an incredibly important finding in the current climate, not only because it demonstrates the incredible work our PhD tutors do in designing academically rigorous courses, but because it tells us that The Brilliant Club is making a real difference in schools.

We are now halfway through our five-year strategy, Join the Club. We have spent this year refining and updating the strategy, and have published our midpoint review, which includes more detail on our new programmes, Parent Power and Join the Dots. It also sets out our aim to support 100,000 state school pupils through our access programmes, including our flagship Scholars Programme, 10,000 students through our student success programmes, and 1,000 parents through Parent Power in the period 2021-26.

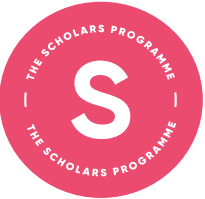
This impact report celebrates our community of tutors, students, schools, universities, ambassadors, and parents, who are all committed, creative, and work hard to improve opportunity for less advantaged students. If you are interested in partnering with us or learning more, we would love to hear from you so we can work together to continue to grow our impact.

**Anne-Marie Canning, MBE**  
**CEO of The Brilliant Club**





In 2022/23, we offered three core programmes:



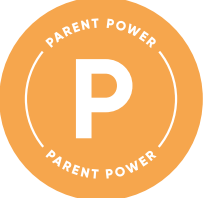
**The Scholars Programme:**

We train our PhD tutors to deliver bespoke courses based on their subject knowledge in our partner schools across the UK. The Scholars Programme increases university knowledge, academic skills and attainment for students aged 8-18, through university-style tutorials and a campus visit.



**Join the Dots:**

A national programme which brings schools and colleges together with universities to support the transition to university. We do this through academic coaching and connecting communities of learners.



**Parent Power:**

Parent Power is driven by parents and carers tackling barriers to education and leading change in their communities, with each chapter supported by an anchor institution and connected by a national network.

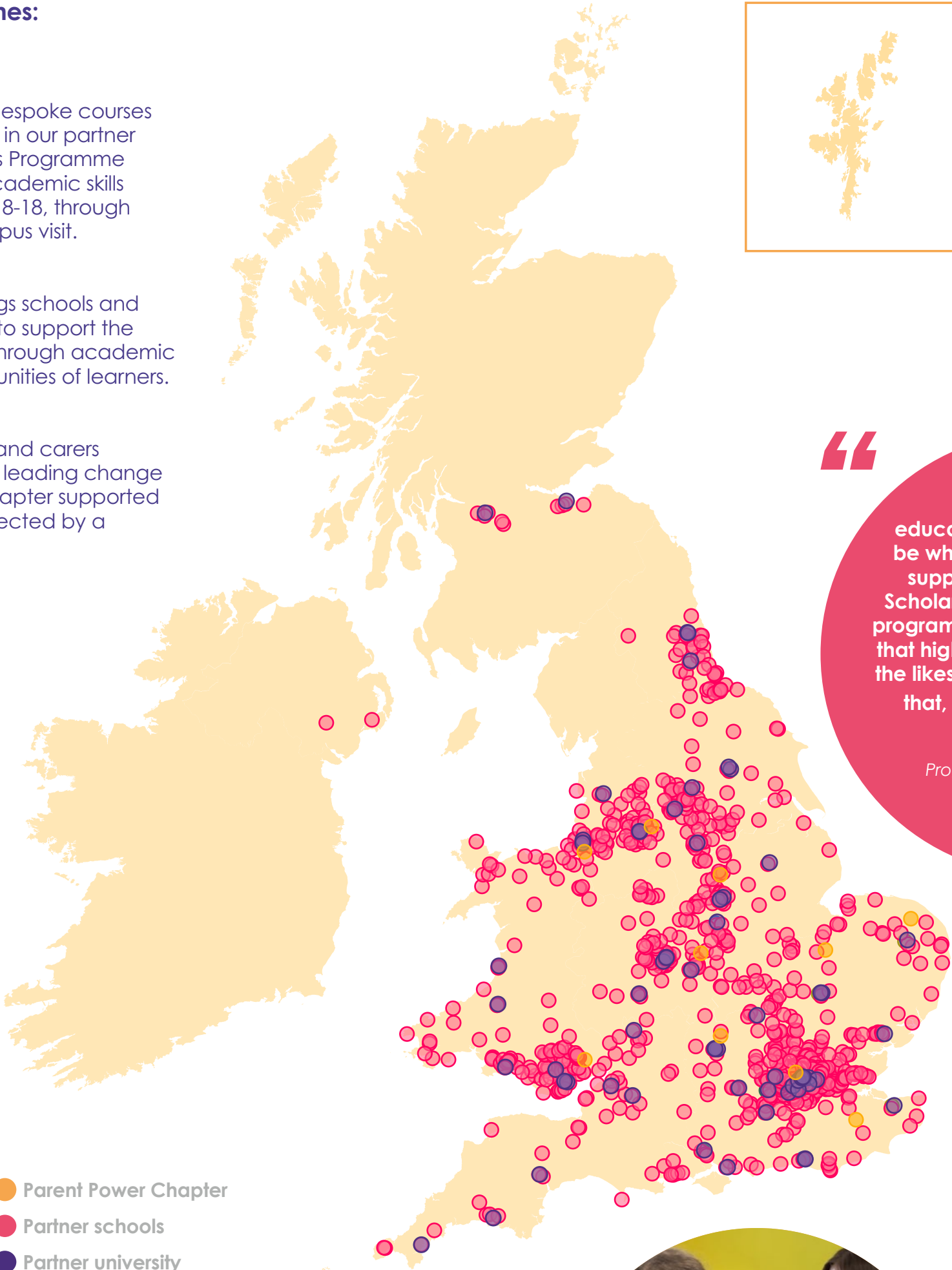
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This was my first experience with a fully independent teaching programme and additionally my first time designing my own course. Whilst the learning curve was fast and intense... I feel significantly more confident in my skills as a teacher, but I feel that I have also developed a great deal of soft skills as well such as confidence and time keeping. Additionally, it has been an absolute pleasure to see my students learn such a challenging course in such a short amount of contact time.

Scholars Programme Tutor,  
University of Sheffield

”

- Parent Power Chapter
- Partner schools
- Partner university



“ The programme has helped me understand what it means to be an independent learner and my coach has given great assistance and feedback to my coursework ”

Join the Dots student,  
King's College  
London

“

I know that my education and career may not be where it is if it weren't for the support of The Brilliant Club's Scholars Programme. Without the programme, I may not have known that higher education is, in fact, for the likes of me and that, more than that, it needs people like me.

Mollie Ruane, Scholars  
Programme Alumna and NHS  
Assistant Psychologist

”

“

It's great to be part of a group that addresses these issues and doesn't wait around for others to come in and create change – we're actually driving that change. We're having those difficult conversations about the low uptake of higher education here in Oldham and what we as parents can do to change that and break down barriers to allow for more children, and their parents, to access higher education.

Rahiel Koser, Community  
Organiser and Parent Leader,  
Oldham Parent Power

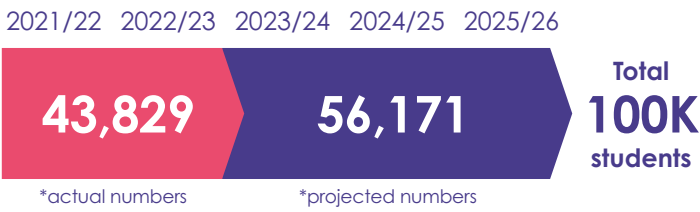
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# Getting in...

Through our programmes, we work with less advantaged students and their families to improve access to the most competitive universities. Our goal is to reach 100,000 students through our access programmes by 2026.



The Scholars Programme gives students aged 8-18 from non-selective state schools and colleges the opportunity to work with a PhD researcher to experience university-style learning.

The programme is structured around seven tutorials and ends with students attending a Graduation Event at a partner university to speak with current undergraduates and learn about university life.

This year's courses included:

**Friends or Foes? Vikings in Medieval England**  
Key Stage 2 Programme

Pupil Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor: \_\_\_\_\_  
PhD Tutor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Coral Reefs in a changing world**  
Key Stage 4 Programme

Pupil Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor: \_\_\_\_\_  
PhD Tutor: \_\_\_\_\_

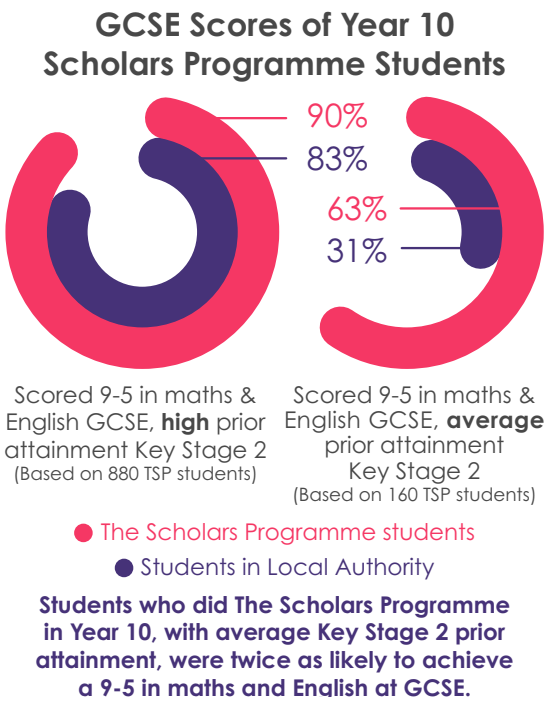
This year we launched our new mobile-first platform for our Scholars Programme schools and tutors, the Hub. We developed this to respond to the changing ways people are engaging digitally, and to ensure that we're as inclusive as possible for students using devices and learning in different contexts.

**“ It gives the students an opportunity to broaden their cultural knowledge and develop academic skills. Perhaps most importantly, it gives those chosen a sense of pride in their ability and a confidence that they perhaps lacked before. ”**

*Teacher, Etonbury Academy, Central Bedfordshire*

## Attainment findings

Data from the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) shows that Scholars Programme students have higher GCSE scores than Local Authority students who have similar Key Stage 2 prior attainment. Students with average prior attainment were twice as likely to achieve a 9-5 in maths and English at GCSE after taking part in The Scholars Programme in Year 10:

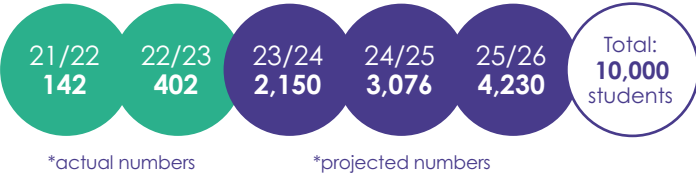


For the last seven years, independent UCAS evaluations have shown that Scholars Programme graduates are statistically significantly more likely to apply and progress to a competitive university than students from similar backgrounds.



# ...Getting on

We know that disadvantage does not disappear when a student arrives at university: students from low-income backgrounds are 20% more likely to drop out of their undergraduate course in the first year than their more advantaged peers. By 2026, we want to support 10,000 students to succeed at university.



We launched our student success work in 2021/22, developing our transition programme Join the Dots and delivering bespoke student success projects with our university partners to support students once they have arrived at university.

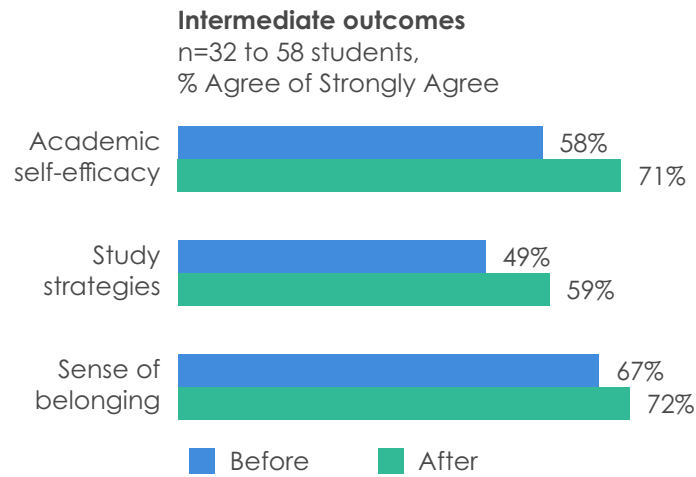


## Join the Dots

Join the Dots brings schools and colleges together with universities who co-create networks of support for students during the transition to university.

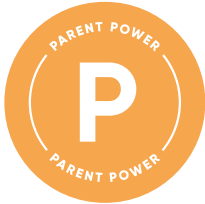
In 2022-23, we ran the pilot of Join the Dots in partnership with The University of Manchester, King's College London, Kingston University, The University of Sussex, The University of Southampton, and Royal Holloway, University of London. In total, 85 students took part.

To evaluate the programme, we measured increases in self-efficacy, study strategy use, and sense of belonging over the course of the programme.





Parents



Parent Power

Parent Power creates networks of parent communities across the UK. On the programme, parents receive community organising training and attend advice and guidance sessions on accessing higher education, so they are empowered to make change in their children's future and ensure they have a fair chance at success in education and beyond.

This year, we added four new Parent Power chapters to our community: Fenland, Cardiff, East Oxford and Banbury, Oldham, Knowsley, Mansfield, East London, and Peterborough.

Recent Parent Power campaigns have addressed the localised barriers to education in communities across the UK:



Cardiff parents have gained commitments from Cardiff University to provide more transparent information about contextual admissions, and to hold specific community-based events to help families understand how they work.



Oldham parents gained a commitment from Oldham Council to include mental health support for young people in their new Family Hubs, and to provide training for parents in mental health support.



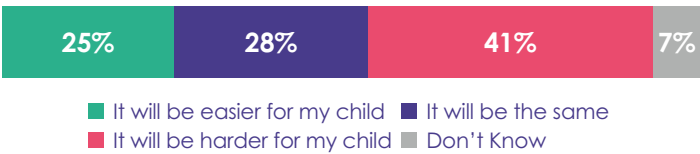
Fenland parents received mayoral backing for a recent campaign to create a safe cycle lane between two towns in the region, so that children can access extra-curricular opportunities.

Parent Polling

In September 2023, we commissioned Public First to poll parents' attitudes towards university to better understand the challenges that parents are facing across the UK. The survey polled 1,005 parents of children in state schools and found that most parents believe that it will be more difficult for their child's generation to attend university than their own.

The polling also shows that parents in the North are most pessimistic about the chances of children in their local area attending university compared to children in the rest of the country. 43% of parents in the North said that children in their local area are less likely to go to university than their peers, compared to 31% in the Midlands, 30% in London, and 26% in the South.

**Do you think it will be easier or harder for your child's generation to attend university compared to your generation?**



We presented the results of our parent polling at the Labour Party Conference in October 2023.



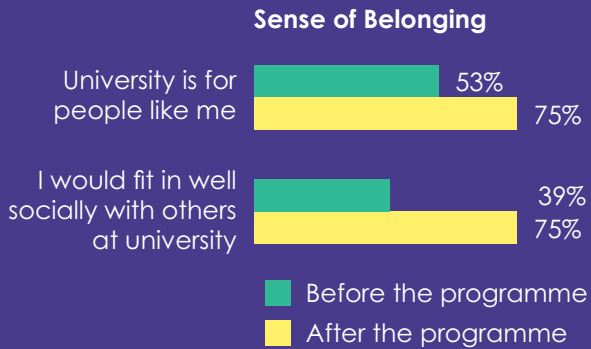
Case studies

Case study: Sanctuary Scholars Programme

This year, we worked with the University of Manchester to run a Sanctuary Scholars Programme for Key Stage 4 students from refugee and migrant backgrounds. The programme was modelled on our flagship Scholars Programme and was made possible by the generosity of Big Give donors. We worked with three schools in the Greater Manchester Area, enabling their students to study with PhD researchers from a range of subject areas to tackle the Big Question: 'Is Change Important?'.

On the programme, 21 students undertook five academic tutorials, had the opportunity to write or present a final piece on the topic, and attended a Graduation Event at the University of Manchester.

**Our evaluation of the programme focused on sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy, and study strategies.**



Ambassador Programme

Case study: Being a Brilliant Club Ambassador

“

The Scholars Programme allowed me to see myself at a really great university. I've just finished my second year studying Law at Oxford University and The Brilliant Club was really such a catalyst for doing that. I visited Oxford during The Scholars Programme, which meant I was a bit more familiar with the university and the course when I came to apply.

When I came to university, it was really daunting and really hard and I remember thinking 'I'm not supposed to be here, I can't write an essay' but, looking back at The Scholars Programme, I knew that I'd done it before, and I'd done it well.

I think it's so important that The Brilliant Club exists because a lot of capable people put up this barrier and think there's no point even trying to apply to university because they aren't good enough and will be rejected. I wanted to become an ambassador to show others from similar backgrounds to me that they can also do this, it's not impossible, there's not a barrier that's impossible to penetrate through. People like me have done it.

”

Valentina,  
Brilliant Club Ambassador





## Evaluation and Consultancy

Our team of social science researchers evaluate the impact of our access and success programmes and projects. They also provide consultancy services to universities and other education organisations through our Brilliant Consulting Unit.

The Brilliant Consulting Unit specialises in research and evaluation, strategy development and digital transformation, and curriculum development and quality assurance.

Bringing together a range of specialisms, we use our expertise to support other organisations who want to ensure better outcomes for future generations. Specifically, we specialise in fairer education and university access and success outcomes.

### Get in touch:

[collaborate@thebrilliantclub.org](mailto:collaborate@thebrilliantclub.org)



## Case study: TechUPWomen

In 2023, we evaluated the multi-award winning TechUPWomen programme, which takes women from underserved groups in the North and North East of England and retrain them into tech careers. Working closely with the programme team, we developed surveys to measure the impact of the programme on participants and collect their feedback, in addition to conducting a series of focus groups.

The evaluation results showed positive impacts on learner outcomes related to tech knowledge, career knowledge, and self-confidence, and provided the programme team with actionable feedback for future cohorts.

It's been a pleasure to work with so many students, teachers, tutors, parents, universities and supporters this year. We look forward to continuing to work with our Brilliant community as we support young people from less advantaged backgrounds to access the most competitive universities and succeed when they get there.

## Supporters

Our supporters play a vital role in supporting access to the most competitive universities and succeed when they get there.

We would like to thank everyone who helped to make a positive difference for young people, including partner organisations, individuals and those who wish to remain anonymous.

- AKO Foundation
- Alan Edward Higgs Charity
- Allen & Overy
- Astra Foundation
- Bristol Masons Charity
- Dataiku
- The David and Elaine Potter Foundation
- DeepMind
- The Dulverton Trust
- Department for Education
- Dr Jacqueline Stedall
- Epic Foundation
- Evolve Care Group
- Frank Walding and Dr Rosie Gilbert
- Jean and Hélène Peters Fund, managed by the King Baudouin Foundation.
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- Cardiff University
- CHASE DTP
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- Durham University
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- Hartpury University
- Imperial College London
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- Kingston University
- Liverpool John Moores University
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- Loughborough University
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- Queen's University Belfast
- Roehampton University
- Royal Holloway, University of London
- SC DTP
- SeNSS
- SOAS, University of London
- St George's, University of London
- Swansea University
- SWW DTP
- The Alan Turing Institute
- The Courtauld Institute of Art
- The Nottingham Trent University
- The Open University
- The University of Bath
- The University of Birmingham
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- York St John University



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