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[Department
for Education](#)

Guidance

Background supporting the enrichment framework for schools and colleges

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Applies to England

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Every child and young person should leave school or college with a strong foundation of knowledge, a love of learning, a well-developed set of skills and the confidence to use them. Throughout their time in education, we want young people to be exposed to a wide range of experiences, which, alongside the core national curriculum and programmes of study, help prepare them for life and work.

We know that enrichment opportunities can help expand horizons, raise aspirations

and improve engagement, and we want to ensure that these opportunities are available for all, not just the privileged few. The development of essential skills, including teamwork, problem solving and communication, can increase sense of belonging and contribute to greater wellbeing and improvements in attainment. These opportunities can also help pupils and students understand and engage with the world around them, equipping them to play a role shaping their own futures, something that is especially important in the context of the change to introduce votes at 16.

Young people have told us that enrichment has improved their sense of agency, resilience and made them feel more confident about their futures.

Enrichment should be a core part of the school and college experience, bringing learning to life, opening up new experiences and helping engage those children who have withdrawn from their education. A well-designed enrichment offer should be clear about how it supports broader development and connects to the curriculum or programmes of study. It should support children and young people's engagement with education and opportunities for schools and colleges to build links with families and their wider community. This framework is designed to help schools and colleges plan, strengthen and evaluate their enrichment offer with that purpose in mind.

This has been designed with the wider government landscape in mind. The [National Youth Strategy](#) aims to halve the participation gap in enriching activities between disadvantaged young people and their peers by 2035. This ambition goes beyond education settings, but opportunities in schools and colleges play a crucial role in achieving this aim, as is noted in the [schools white paper: every child achieving and thriving](#). The schools white paper discusses the importance of enrichment in schools, setting out a core enrichment entitlement for every pupil.

The [post-16 education and skills white paper](#) sets out our plan to educate and train the workforce of the future so people have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. As part of [funding rules for 16 to 19 provision 2025 to 2026](#), further education (FE) providers are expected to offer non-qualification activity as a coherent part of study programmes which supports the delivery of nationally recognised qualifications for all students. Non-qualification hours cover enrichment activities under employment, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) hours. A higher level of non-qualification activity may be appropriate for some students on high needs programmes or those students who also hold an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

Development of the framework

The enrichment framework has been developed with support from a [working group](#) comprising of experts from education, research and sector organisations.

We will continue this cross-sector approach as we work to support schools and colleges to develop their offers against the benchmarks, offering practical support and opportunities to learn from good practice across the sector. In addition, new ambassadors will champion enrichment and marshal support across sectors in our [5 key focus areas](#).

What is enrichment?

Enrichment in schools and colleges encompasses a wide range of activities and experiences that exist beyond the curriculum, either linked directly to the curriculum (co-curricular), or covering skills, knowledge and activities that work in addition to it (extra-curricular).

Enrichment can support children and young people with their personal development, allowing them to explore their interests, try new activities and have fun, alongside developing skills and knowledge that can help with transitions and future readiness.

Enrichment may include opportunities across:

- civic engagement, for example volunteering, debating, school and college democracy, community engagement
- arts and culture, for example, taking part in and having live experience of music, art, dance, theatre, other expressive arts, visits to museums and galleries
- nature, outdoors and adventure, for example time outdoors, climate education and sustainability projects, gardening, residentials and camps
- sport and physical activities, for example participating in individual and team sports, physical activities like dance, fitness activities or cycling, representing the school or college, attending live events
- developing wider life and future skills, for example digital literacy, STEM clubs, enterprise, cooking, and managing finances

Enrichment may be delivered within timetabled lesson time or outside of it (for example, lunchtime, before or after school or college, weekend events). Enrichment activities may be delivered by school or college staff, or external providers, and can include peer leadership with support and guidance from staff.

Why enrichment matters

Nearly all schools offer some form of enrichment to their pupils. In the 2024 to 2025 academic year, [research](#) suggests that 98% of schools offered at least one extracurricular activity. The importance of enrichment has also been recognised in further education. A [2026 survey of Association of Colleges members](#) found that 99% of respondents agreed with the statement that “enrichment is an essential element of study programmes for all young people aged 16 to 19 and should be a high priority”.

Enrichment covers a wide variety of activity types and delivery methods and children who take part in enrichment will have different needs, interests and experiences. As a result, its potential impact can vary. However, international evidence suggests that participation in enrichment activities can be associated with a range of positive outcomes, such as:

- developing key skills such as team work and problem solving
- a greater sense of confidence, resilience and agency
- pupil’s sense of school belonging
- academic attainment
- wellbeing, life satisfaction and better mental health
- social cohesion, interaction and forming friendships

We will continue to work with schools and colleges to build on this framework to consistently capture outcomes for children and young people of a strong enrichment offer. This includes its potential to play an important role in supporting attendance and engagement in school life, and to give vulnerable young people positive things to do.

SEND inclusion in enrichment activities

This guidance applies to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in mainstream and specialist settings. It seeks to support schools and colleges to design and deliver inclusive enrichment offers, setting out benchmarks that are flexible to meet the different circumstances and needs of children and young people. Case studies from a range of both specialist and mainstream settings are included to highlight current practice, and tools and resources have been included with SEND inclusion in mind.

The [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#) highlights that, with the right support, most children and young people with SEND can aspire to work, live independently and be active members of their community, and that planning for these outcomes should begin from the earliest years and be person-centred, building on the young person's strengths, aspirations and needs. This preparation should sit alongside, and in addition to, the enrichment activities that all learners participate in, ensuring that young people with SEND have the same opportunities to engage in wider school and community life while also receiving targeted support to build confidence, independence and decision-making skills.

Careers guidance and enrichment

Careers guidance and enrichment both contribute to developing transferrable skills for young people's futures. Schools and colleges are required to follow DfE's statutory [careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#). This means they must provide independent and impartial careers guidance. They are expected to implement a structured careers programme aligned with the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#), which include multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace.

Schools must also provide access to technical education and apprenticeship providers to ensure all pupils understand their education and training options beyond the school.

The government has committed to improve careers guidance in schools and colleges and to guarantee 2 weeks' worth of work experience for every young

person. By engaging in enrichment activities in tandem with careers support, including work experience, young people benefit from the personal growth that comes with a wide range of hands-on experiences that get them out of the classroom and into real-life situations. This offers the foundations to build confidence and essential skills such as teamwork, creativity and resilience, to help prepare for work and life.

Employer-rich careers guidance has a well-established impact on preparing young people for the world of work. When impartial careers advice is combined with meaningful employer engagement, it not only supports successful transitions into employment but also strengthens future workforce readiness.

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