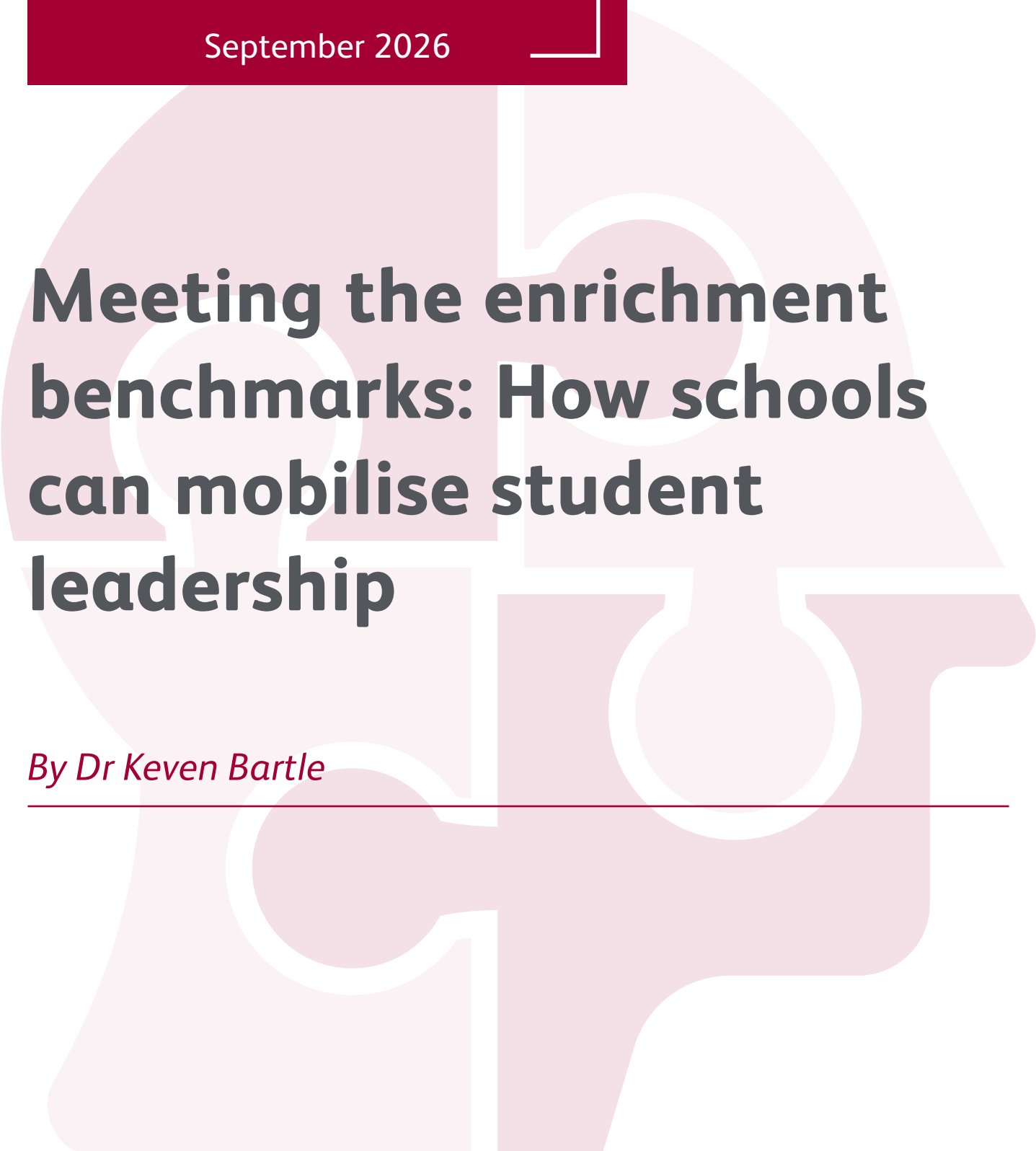




SSAT Think Piece

September 2026

Meeting the enrichment benchmarks: How schools can mobilise student leadership

By Dr Keven Bartle

How confident are you that every pupil in your school has meaningful opportunities to participate, contribute and lead?

Enrichment is moving higher up the agenda for schools. With the DfE's new **Enrichment Framework and Benchmarks**, alongside a growing focus on enrichment within Ofsted inspections, schools are being encouraged to think more strategically about the opportunities available to every young person.

And this isn't simply about offering more clubs or activities. Emerging inspection evidence points towards greater attention being paid to **who participates, how provision reflects pupils' needs and interests, how schools monitor engagement, and whether enrichment is aligned with wider school priorities.**

In this think piece, Dr Keven Bartle examines what these expectations could mean in practice, drawing on SSAT's analysis of inspection reports and its work with schools. He also explores **how student voice and leadership can help schools strengthen enrichment by making better use of the capacity, ideas and experiences already within their communities.**

For school leaders, it's a timely opportunity to consider not just what enrichment you offer, but **who benefits from it and whether your current approach will meet growing expectations.**

About the author

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Keven has been a teacher for almost three decades and was headteacher at a richly diverse secondary school in London for nine years. Through his career, Keven has been committed to the power of education for social justice and transformation, working in schools where staff make a difference to the lives of children, families and communities.

Click below for a free consultation with Keven to discuss how your school is ready for Ofsted.



Meeting the Enrichment Benchmarks: Lessons from SSAT's Student Leadership work

What does it mean to 'enrich' something (a school, for example) or someone (a school pupil, for example)? In other words, what moral imperative lies beneath the DfE's recently published enrichment framework and benchmarks?

Sitting at the heart of the word enrichment lies the single-syllabled but incredibly complex word 'rich'. That incredible complexity is not surprising given that it is one of the oldest words in our language with a clear lineage from the Proto-Indo-European (reg), through Celtic (rix), Proto-Germanic (rikijaz), Old English (rice) and French (riche).

The rich heritage of the word 'rich' means that we have a whole host of cognates related to power (from the Germanic 'reich' to the Latin 'rex' to the English 'regal'). There are also cognates related to wealth, as the meaning of the word shifted away from the act of ruling to one denoting magnificence (from the Yiddish 'raykh' to the Danish 'rik' and the French 'riche').

In more recent times, the meaning of the word has shifted again to refer to abundance, as we talk about the richness (for example) of our linguistic heritage, the richness of our food, or soil, or of colour schemes.

It is this version of richness as abundance that, to my mind, underpins the thrust of the DfE's guidance on enrichment for pupils and students. And that, as I shall outline in this post, is what makes the new [enrichment framework](#) and [benchmarks](#) one of the best things to come out of the DfE for some time.

Enrichment Framework: An abundance of opportunities, but an abundance of challenges

The first thing to say about the enrichment framework is that it matches the very best ambitions of school leaders, students and families about how the lives of young people could and should be made richer. There are five key areas included in the framework and these are:

- ▶ Civic engagement: Volunteering, debating, and school democracy.
- ▶ Arts and culture: Music, theatre, dance, and gallery visits.
- ▶ Nature, outdoors and adventure: Gardening, camps, and climate education.
- ▶ Sport and physical activity: Team sports, fitness, and live events.
- ▶ Wider life and future skills: STEM clubs, digital literacy, cooking, and finance.

What has become clear since their publication is that there is little to no criticism of what is included in the framework (nor, from what we can see, what has been omitted).

Instead, the criticisms that have been made emphasise the value behind the richness of the offer schools are expected to make for enrichment. The elements of the framework are positive but where is the funding coming from, how will staff capacity be impacted by them, how much bureaucracy will they entail, which schools might disproportionately be impacted (positively or negatively) by linking them to the inspection framework, and why the tight timescale for rollout?

This is not to say that these qualms from school leaders and associated professionals are not insignificant. Instead, my argument is that the focus on enrichment within schools across these five very rich areas for the development of young people have broad consensus. The 'what' of enrichment is thus relatively uncontested, so what about the 'hows'?

Enrichment Benchmarks: Using abundance to achieve abundance

To my mind, and without downplaying the concerns of others, the question of how to steer a school towards better enrichment provision with limited resources is well articulated by the enrichment benchmarks. The table below summarises key elements of each benchmark.

Enrichment Benchmark 1	Enrichment Benchmark 2	Enrichment Benchmark 3	Enrichment Benchmark 4	Enrichment Benchmark 5	Enrichment Benchmark 6	Enrichment Benchmark 7	Enrichment Benchmark 8
<i>Strategically Aligned</i>	<i>Broad & Well Rounded</i>	<i>Communicated and Celebratory</i>	<i>Shaped by Community</i>	<i>Accessible & Engaging</i>	<i>Works in Partnership</i>	<i>Outcomes-Focused</i>	<i>Continually improving</i>
Leader support	Access for all	Information for students/parents	Students and parent voice	Equitable and inclusive	Leveraging expertise	Academic outcomes	Feedback from participants
Based on school values	Takes place regularly	High aspirations	Students as leaders of activity	Participation monitored	Feedback and review	Personal outcomes	Feedback from stakeholders
Improvement plan connection	Includes school day activities	Supported reflection	Consideration of staff capacity	Tailored to contextual needs	Signposting offers	Monitoring of outcomes	Responsive to insights

For the purposes of this blogpost, I want to focus on the benchmarks that stand out as ones where schools can use resources currently at their disposal (areas where they have abundance already) to improve the abundance of their future enrichment offer.

Because of my focus on student leadership as part of my role at SSAT, I want to use this as a way of grounding my thoughts in something helpful for readers. In doing so, I am also paying heed to the fact that 'civic engagement' is the first of the five areas of the enrichment framework and, as I shall show, student leadership is the biggest potential source of abundance within schools.

Enrichment Benchmark 1: Strategic Alignment

Let's start with benchmark 1, ensuring that the enrichment offer is strategically aligned. Every school has an array of leaders, a clear statement of values and an improvement plan, making this an area of abundance within the enrichment benchmarks. My work with school leaders overseeing student leadership has shown me that the best already meet this benchmark.

One way in which they do this is by having a headteacher who has a clear, often simple, vision about what student leadership should achieve that is clearly pinned to the school's values. These schools also ensure that every leader has an expectation on them around student voice and/or leadership, not leaving it to chance or to pastoral and PE/Arts leaders. In many, but not all, of these schools, there is either a section of school and team improvement plans around student leadership or there is an expectation that student leaders will develop their own improvement plan that connects to the whole school improvement priorities and plan.

For me, based on these examples of effective student leadership, this enrichment benchmark is about increasing the efficiency of school leadership by all its practitioners, including students themselves. It is about setting expectations and embedding them into the culture of school improvement through three things that schools have in abundance: leaders, values and plans.

Enrichment Benchmark 3: Communicated and Celebratory

Benchmark 3 is another of the benchmarks which taps into areas of abundance for schools, requiring as it does that schools mobilise their various information channels, aspirations and approaches to supporting reflective practice.

Two key strands of SSAT's work in supporting student leadership are our long-established recognition scheme for student leaders themselves and our newly created recognition scheme for schools with effective (or developing) student leadership provision. Rooted in what research tells us about effective student leadership, the schemes enable students and schools to engage in supported reflection on the aspiration underpinning their work. The very focus on recognition has enabled individual students and schools to be proud of their work and to use this pride to better communicate their achievements – and renewed ambitions – with others in their school community. In doing so, they have created a virtuous circle for achieving those ambitions.

As a headteacher, I was able to witness first-hand the impact of the Gatsby Benchmarks on our school's provision around careers and pathways. My hope for the new Enrichment Benchmarks is that they perform the same function around extra- and supra-curricular provision, including student leadership. If this is to be the case, then this third benchmark, rooted in an existing abundance for school leaders of communication, aspiration and reflection will be critical. It may even be the case that this third benchmark is an ideal starting point for school leaders.

Enrichment Benchmark 4: Shaped by Community

Benchmark 4 is perhaps the one that most effectively addresses the concerns raised about the new framework, espousing a shift in thinking about enrichment provision. It articulates the view that enrichment provision should be shaped (and, increasingly, delivered) by both student voice and student leadership, two areas of potential abundance for every school.

This matches closely the most common challenges facing school leaders with responsibility for enhancing student leadership when I speak with them. Too often for these leaders, student voice raises issues for adult leaders to solve, or student leadership begins with good intentions that somehow never reach fulfilment. In the best schools I have worked with, these problems have been addressed through engaging students at a younger age, rather than leaving senior roles to those entering the most critical period for their external assessments. Really good schools ask aspiring student leaders to outline a vision and plans for a legacy project and hold them (gently but firmly) accountable for its fulfilment. The very best school I have ever seen ensures that every senior student is required to provide an enrichment activity and, crucially, that every junior student is required to attend at least one of them.

In all the scenarios outlined above, the achievement of benchmark 4 is closely linked to the achievement of benchmark 1. To mobilise the abundance of student leadership to enhance the capacity provided by staff, the activities are aligned with the school's values and its improvement planning and are supported (strategically not operationally) by school staff.

Enrichment Benchmark 5: Accessible and Engaging

Benchmark 5 is another area where schools have an abundance upon which they can draw to enhance their enrichment provision. Although some may do it better than others, all schools value and strive for inclusion. Schools are data-rich and can mobilise this around participation in enrichment, and all are very aware of their contextual challenges and opportunities.

One of the most impressive schools I have visited around student leadership had managed to weld these three areas of abundance together beautifully. Serving a community with a huge number of socio-economic challenges but a close-knit community culture, they have for several years monitored the take up of student leadership opportunities by children from potentially vulnerable backgrounds. Based on the data, they used student voice to shape the offer to engage more students, rethought their application processes, and actively targeted improved representation by key under-represented groups. The backwash effect on the quality of student leadership was significant and sustained when I met with their student leaders. Their sense of belonging (beyond their time at the school) was profound and incredibly moving.

In this example, knowledge was seen as powerful and empowering. The move to enrichment benchmarks from the DfE is a welcome attempt to provide more guidance for schools on what the 'inclusion lens' within Ofsted might look like. Engagement in enrichment activities is clearly a strong correlate with belonging and one route to enhancing the achievement (personal and academic) of students. Mobilising data to improve engagement will be crucial.

Conclusions: Using abundance to enhance more than abundance

The focus of this post has been to identify the enrichment benchmarks which schools can most easily utilise the resources that are currently at their disposal to create an increased abundance of enrichment opportunities. Drawing from our work with many schools on student leadership, the intention was to offer some suggestions as to the next steps schools might take.

Student voice and leadership are just one part of the enrichment framework but, as mentioned earlier, the positioning of 'Civic Engagement' as the first of the key areas of the framework is, I think, telling. The fact that student voice and leadership are prominent within the benchmarks, notably benchmark 4 but arguably through each of them, is also telling. For me, the greatest source of abundance available to schools is to be found in the capacity of children and young people to give voice to and lead alongside the staff of the school in areas of priority.

But, going back to the etymology of the word 'rich' with which I began this post, it is not only about creating an abundance of opportunities through a student-centred and student-led enrichment programme. It is also about creating an enrichment programme (with student leadership at its centre) that creates something magnificent and enhances the wealth of opportunity and experience available to young people. In doing so, digging back to the original meaning of the word 'rich', it is, in the end, about empowerment.

Postscript: How SSAT can help you reach two more of the enrichment benchmarks

Benchmark 6 is one area where schools are most worried about the resource implications of the enrichment framework. This benchmark is about working in partnership and requires schools to leverage expertise, seek feedback, and signpost wider enrichment offers to students.

We understand this concern about resources, which is why our [Student Leader Recognition Scheme](#) and [School Recognition Scheme](#) are free for members and have a low-cost option for non-members. These schemes will also help schools in meeting the demands of the 8th enrichment benchmark, supporting schools to gain feedback from participants and stakeholders in student leadership work so that your school can respond to these insights.

Our webinar on [Ensuring Student Leadership has Impact](#) is our longest webinar and comes with a pre-recorded preparatory webinar, making it great value for money. Even our most costly option, in-person [training for student leaders](#), is competitively priced, bespoke, and leaves schools with the resources they need to follow up with wider cohorts of student leaders.

What all our student leadership options have in common, is that they help schools to meet these newly expected standards around a crucial aspect of the new enrichment framework, civic engagement. In doing so, as this post has sought to demonstrate, they enable empowered student leaders to be crucial resources in enhancing the abundance of other aspects of your enrichment offer.

If you would like to know more about our student leadership work, we have previously blogged about how it relates [recognition](#), [inclusion](#), [empowerment](#), and [research evidence](#). Feel free to [book a call](#) with us if you would like to know more about how that would look in your school.



Canary in the Coalmine: What we already know about Ofsted and the enrichment benchmarks



Since September 2023, SSAT have been tracking the data and 'next step' comments on every inspection report published by Ofsted. In this blogpost, we will be having a look at a microtrend that we think is worth watching: the uptick in comments about enrichment that occurred before the publication of the enrichment framework by the DfE. Based on that analysis, we will suggest some likely areas of focus around enrichment for school leaders approaching the inspection window in the coming academic year.

Two key documents were published in June 2026 that are worth bearing in mind. The first, published by Ofsted on 12th June, was an update to the inspection toolkit which included the line ***“ensuring that any enrichment is purposeful and varied, having regard to the enrichment framework”***. The unsettling thing for school leaders at that time was that the enrichment framework and associated benchmarks had not been published. Three days later, on 15th June, the DfE published the non-statutory enrichment framework and benchmarks.

Enrichment in inspections since November 2025: What does the data tell us?

One of the most interesting things about tracking Ofsted inspection data is seeing the ways in which discussion and debate about potential changes to education policy and guidance begin to make their way into inspection reports before the policy/guidance is published. Depending on how big an impact these debates make on inspection reports, we think of them as trends or microtrends.

The first thing to say is that the numbers around enrichment that I refer to in this post are very small. This is a microtrend. And yet, as with changes in the recent past about inclusion or the impact of safeguarding on leader wellbeing, we can say with some confidence that what is now a microtrend may well become something bigger as the new inspection year gathers pace.

Point 1: Personal Development and Wellbeing next steps are on the rise

Comments about enrichment fall under the personal development and wellbeing (PDW) part of the inspection framework, and next steps focused on PDW increased from 4.0% in the 2024/25 academic year to 5.4% in 2025/26 under the new inspection framework. And that later figure might yet increase as we are still waiting for many inspection reports from June and from July to be published. PDW next steps were also increasing across last academic year from 3.7% in the final quarter of 2025 to 5.3% in the first quarter of 2026 to 5.8% in the second quarter of 2026.

Point 2: Within PDW, next steps around enrichment are also rising

Since November 2025, when the new framework became operational, specific next steps about enrichment provision stand at 0.9% of all next steps, up from 0.8% in 2024/25. Again, though, the proportion of schools receiving a next step around enrichment has increased over the course of the most recent academic year, from 0.7% in Q4 of 2025 to 0.9% in Q1 of 2026 to 1.0% in Q2 of 2026. These are, as stated above, small numbers but they are not insignificant. Of the inspection reports published by the end of the school year, 64 schools had received notification of the need to improve enrichment provision as a next step. This made it the 24th most frequent next step out of a total of 62. By comparison, only 19 schools were told they needed to improve compliance with safeguarding legislation, and two fewer schools (62 in total) were advised that they needed to improve behaviour of students.

Point 3: School context seems to play a part in next steps around enrichment

There are some interesting data around which schools are more or less likely to have enrichment identified as a next step. Secondaries are marginally more likely than primaries to have it mentioned, but independent schools are far more likely for it to come up on their inspection reports (1.7% of all next steps compared to the 0.9% for all schools).

Schools with above average levels of deprivation as measured by free school meals are also much more likely to have enrichment as a next step than schools with below average levels of FSM (1.2% compared to 0.7%). The same is true, but less stark for schools with above average local deprivation than schools with below average local deprivation (1.0% versus 0.7%).

SEND plays a role too, particularly as measured by the proportion of students with EHCPs. For those with above average EHCPs, enrichment is a next step for 0.9% but is only mentioned for 0.6% of schools with below a average number of EHCPs.

And, finally, there is some significant regional variation, with the highest proportion of schools having enrichment as a next step found in the East of England (1.5%) and London (a whopping 2.3%).

Point 4: Enrichment next steps are marginally more risky than other next steps for gradings

We track every grading given to every school by associating the five levels of judgment with a numerical figure. Exceptional is given a 5, through to Urgent Improvement which is given a 1, with Expected Standard as a 3. This enables us to track the average risk for all next steps and for each individual next step by calculating the mean grade for each school and aggregating these.

For any next step the benchmark figure is 2.85 (close to 3.00 which would be an Expected Standard). For schools that have received enrichment as a next step, the mean grade is 2.76, which is notably but not massively below the mean for any next step. Using the same comparisons as earlier, statutory safeguarding next steps have a mean grade of 1.68 (well below the Needs Attention judgment) and poor student behaviour has a mean rating of 2.48 (slightly closer to Needs Attention than Expected Standard). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the mean grade for Personal Development and Wellbeing is much lower for schools that have enrichment identified as a next step (2.78) than those with any next step (3.13).

Enrichment in Inspections since March 2026: What do the next steps tell us?

As outlined above, the data from inspection reports tell us that Personal Development and Wellbeing is featuring much more often as a next step for school improvement than has been the case recently, and that the same pattern is noticeable about specific next steps about enrichment. There are some interesting variations in the data depending on school context that are worth paying attention to and that there is a marginally greater risk to gradings from having a next step about enrichment than is the case for having any identified next step.

In short, the data tell us that something interesting, but not particularly big, is happening with regards to enrichment in the outgoing iteration of the inspection toolkit that may well get bigger in the incoming version for 2026/27. But it is in the specific next step comments where we see some interesting patterns about how discussions feeding into the creation of the enrichment framework and benchmarks had already found their way into the lived reality of inspection before the new toolkit and guidance had been published.

Point 1: Strategic alignment of enrichment provision is an expectation

The first of the newly published enrichment benchmarks is about strategic alignment of provision through leader support, connections to school values and improvement planning. Recent comments on inspection reports suggest an increased focus on this deliberate approach. Some 'next steps' have highlighted the role of enrichment in enhancing cultural capital:

Leaders should further improve the effectiveness of their personal development programme to ensure that pupils access enriching activities which are **specifically designed to develop and broaden their cultural lives**. (Primary – 23rd June – Expected Standard for PDW)

The proprietor and those responsible for leadership should tailor extensive opportunities for pupils **to develop their cultural capital** in line with their aspirations and interests. (Independent – 3rd March – Expected Standard for PDW)

Coherence, consistency and contextual appreciation have also featured in recent next step comments about improving enrichment opportunities:

Leaders should further develop **a coherently designed range of wider opportunities** and track the uptake of these carefully to ensure that these consistently benefit all groups of pupils. (Secondary – 19th May – Expected Standard for PDW3)

Leaders should ensure that enrichment **stretches pupils' interests and talents** more consistently, and that any practical barriers do not limit pupils' participation. (Special – 12th May – Expected Standard for PDW)

Leaders should continue to develop their wider curriculum enrichment offer, **taking the school's context and pupils' aspirations into consideration**. (Primary – 3rd March – Expected Standard for PDW)

Point 2: Tracking of data around enrichment has become an inspection expectation

Data is at the heart of many of the new enrichment benchmarks. Monitoring provision is implied in benchmark 2. Monitoring participation is specified in benchmark 5. Monitoring outcomes is specified in benchmark 7. Monitoring feedback is strongly implied in benchmarks 6 and 8.

Inspection reports from before the publication of the enrichment benchmarks focus most heavily on the monitoring of participation. What is interesting in the quotes below is the end to which the inspection team believes that the schools concerned should focus their monitoring of participation. For some this is about connection to students' interests. For others it is about connection to context. For others it is about increasing participation of some or of all students. But all are concerned with more effective monitoring of participation in enrichment.

Leaders should continue to monitor pupil participation in clubs to **more closely match pupils' talents and interests** to the wide range of opportunities open to them. (Primary – 2nd June – Strong Standard for PDW)

Leaders should use enrichment activity tracking data more effectively to widen participation in enrichment opportunities **so that the most vulnerable pupils benefit fully from the school's offer**. (Secondary – 6th May – Expected Standard for PDW)

Leaders should ensure that pupils' wider experiences are tracked routinely, ensuring that **opportunities are carefully tailored to the school's context** so that these are fully accessible to all pupils. (Primary – 9th June – Expected Standard for PDW)

Leaders should increase the rigour with which pupils' experiences are monitored and evaluated with a view to **ensuring that all pupils consistently benefit** from the full range of opportunities that leaders envision for them. (Secondary – 19th May – Expected Standard for PDW)

Point 3: There are higher expectations about enrichment take-up by vulnerable students

As indicated from some of the next steps shown above, a critical aspect of recent inspection reports has been on the participation by vulnerable students in enrichment. This is at the heart of benchmark 5 of the enrichment framework which in turn slots in with the Ofsted focus on inclusion both as a judgement and as a lens for other judgements.

As has been typical for many inspection reports since the change to the overarching framework in 2025, these comments typically refer to either SEND or disadvantage but can also include more general reference to any students who face barriers to their learning.

Leaders should ensure that **pupils who are disadvantaged, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities**, are more closely monitored in their uptake of wider opportunities to ensure access to these is maximised. (Primary – 2nd June – Expected Standard for PDW)

Leaders should ensure that all pupils, including **those who face barriers to their learning** and/or wellbeing, participate in, and can benefit from, the wealth of personal development opportunities which the school provides. (Primary – 28th April – Expected Standard for PDW)

Leaders should continue to **prioritise disadvantaged pupils** when considering the extra-curricular offer to ensure that all pupils benefit fully from the activities that are available. (Secondary – 24th March – Expected Standard for PDW)

Point 4: Leaders are expected to heed student interest in planning enrichment

Enrichment benchmark 4 says that extra-curricular provision should be 'shaped by community' and references the importance of student (and parent) voice in shaping the offer and the use of student leadership of enrichment activities to enable consideration of staff capacity. I have addressed this element of the enrichment benchmarks in the previous article.

As shown above in the section about strategic alignment, this involves consideration of student needs and interests generally, given the context of the school. But there are also inspection next steps that make more specific references to groups of students (other than those who are seen as vulnerable) whose needs are seen as being under-served. Notably, for secondary schools in the window, opportunities for older students have been a focus for some inspectors.

Leaders should ensure that extra-curricular and wider opportunities for pupils' personal development **more closely match pupils' needs and interests** so that pupils benefit fully from the school's enrichment offer. (Primary – 12th May – Expected Standard for PDW)

Leaders should extend the school's programme of personal development and increase the range of wider **opportunities available to older pupils and students**, including opportunities for enrichment and leadership development, so that pupils can further develop their interests and aspirations. *(Secondary – 14th April – Expected Standard for PDW)*

Leaders should **increase and broaden sixth-form students' participation** in wider opportunities beyond the academic curriculum. *(Secondary – 14th April – Expected Standard for PDW)*

Point 5: Next steps around enrichment are often linked with expected/strong standards

It is worth noting that all the quotes included here are from the inspection reports of schools that achieved either the Expected or Strong standards for Personal Development and Wellbeing in their most recent inspection. Five other schools have received a lower grading (Needs Attention or Urgent Improvement) for PDW since March with next steps about enrichment, but the next steps for these schools are more basic. They suggest that provision is insufficient.

Leaders need to continue to **develop the range of purposeful opportunities** pupils can access to broaden pupils' experiences and enable them to develop their talents and interests. *(Primary – 9th June – Needs Attention for PDW)*

Leaders continue to **develop the school's extra-curricular programme** to broaden pupils' experiences beyond their academic studies further. *(Independent – 28th April – Needs Attention for PDW)*

The comment below is a more typical scenario for schools, given that the average grading for Personal Development and Wellbeing is the highest across the new framework and averages notably above the Expected Standard. It is for a school that was judged, across all areas of the framework, to be at the Strong Standard and if focused more on participation than provision.

Leaders should ensure that there are exceptionally high standards across the school and should **further embed their work to increase pupil participation** in the school's extensive clubs and societies offer. *(Secondary – 11th March – Strong Standard for PDW)*

What comments like these indicate is that the new enrichment framework and the associated enrichment benchmarks are likely to be used by inspection teams as a quality indicator to judge whether a school is better than the Expected Standard or perhaps better than the Strong Standard. Or, to put it another way for highly ambitious schools, the enrichment framework and benchmarks may well be a quality indicator that prevents schools from getting an Exceptional judgment or a Strong Standard that they may otherwise have been hoping for.

If the quotes used throughout the second half of this blogpost are typical of what schools can expect going forward into the 2026/27 academic year, there are four key insights for schools aiming for the Strong Standard or Exceptional gradings for Personal Development and Wellbeing.

- ▶ Make sure enrichment is at the centre of your improvement strategies
- ▶ Track data about enrichment better and be clear about the strategic purpose of doing so
- ▶ Focus on take-up of enrichment by under-represented (especially vulnerable) students
- ▶ Listen to student voice and utilise student leadership in shaping the enrichment offer

Conclusion: The enrichment framework is already informing inspection, and this will grow

In this post, I have drawn from SSAT's tracking of inspection reports to demonstrate that discussions about the creation of enrichment benchmarks are already shaping inspection activity. Quantitative data tells us that there was an increased focus on enrichment by inspection teams as the last academic year developed and a consequent increase in focus on the Personal Development and Wellbeing area of the framework. Further investigation of the data shows that this increase in frequency is more notable in some contexts and settings than others, including schools with higher levels of SEND and/or higher levels of deprivation.

Exploration of the qualitative data from the 'next steps' sections of inspection reports published since March show that there were several elements of the enrichment benchmarks that started to appear in inspection reports before the enrichment framework was published. These include the need for strategic alignment, effective monitoring, and consideration of student voice in developing an enrichment offer. As well as coming before the publication of the enrichment framework, this enhanced focus by inspection teams on enrichment has happened before the revised toolkit was published (and long before it goes live in the autumn term of 2026).

As explained at the start of the blogpost, I identified the increased focus on enrichment as a microtrend in the most recent academic year. For school leaders who found their schools being judged against a set of unpublished standards, despite this not being in the inspection toolkit, this will have been challenging to say the least. For school leaders heading into the new academic year and who find themselves in the inspection window, the message is clear. From September, the enrichment benchmarks will be live, and Ofsted will be looking more closely at how well schools are working towards them. They are unlikely to provide a barrier to getting to an Expected Standard, but it is very likely that they will increasingly be the hallmark for schools seeking the Strong Standard or an Exceptional grading for Personal Development and Wellbeing.

If you are a school leader interested in learning more about how SSAT can support your work around enrichment, particularly in how you can mobilise student voice and leadership, this partner blogpost may be helpful. You can also [book a call](#) with me to find out more.

If you would like to find out more about our key insights based on our tracking of inspection reports, you can book onto our [Inspection Insights webinar](#) on 15th October.



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