

Agenda Item	7.
Report No	EDU/25/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Education

Date: 26 August 2026

Report Title: Inverness Catchment Review Update

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following discussion at the June Education Committee which highlighted concerns about catchment arrangements in parts of Inverness, including the Holm and Lochardil areas, Members participated in a seminar on 30 June 2026 to consider school roll forecasting, housing growth, placing requests, statutory consultation requirements and catchment arrangements across the city. The issues raised through these discussions highlighted the need for further analysis of existing catchment arrangements and their relationship to school capacity, forecast roll growth and future educational planning.
- 1.2 It is recommended that a focused review of the Inverness Royal Academy and Millburn Academy Associated School Groups (ASGs) should now be undertaken.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. Note the current school roll forecast position across Inverness Associated School Groups.
 - ii. Note concerns that have been raised regarding catchment arrangements within parts of Inverness.
 - iii. Agree that officers undertake further detailed analysis of primary and secondary catchment arrangements within Inverness Royal Academy and Millburn Academy Associated School Groups.
 - iv. Agree that the findings of the review be reported back to a further Members' Seminar before bringing a report to Committee setting out options, implications and recommendations arising from the review.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource**
There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. Any future proposals resulting from the review process may have financial implications which will be reported to Members as part of a future report.
- 3.2 **Legal**
Any proposal to amend a school catchment area would require consultation in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. This would include preparation of an Educational Benefits Statement, statutory consultation with stakeholders, consideration by Education Scotland and a subsequent decision by the Council.
- 3.3 **Risk**
Failure to review catchment arrangements where localised pressures emerge may limit the Council's ability to maximise use of available school capacity and plan effectively for future housing growth. Equally, any future catchment proposal may generate significant public interest and require careful engagement with affected communities.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)**
There are no direct health and safety implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic**
There are no specific Gaelic implications arising from this report. It is not proposed that Gaelic Medium Education catchments are reviewed as part of this exercise.

4. Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required. If proposals come forward that make recommendations for change a screening will be undertaken at that time.

5. Background and Current Position

- 5.1 The Council regularly reviews school roll forecasts, school capacities, housing development information and wider pupil movement trends to support educational planning and investment decisions. School roll forecasting is informed by demographic trends, housing completions, planned housing developments and associated pupil generation forecasts.

Current forecast data indicates differing capacity positions across Inverness secondary schools. Millburn Academy is forecast to operate above capacity in the short term. Inverness Royal Academy remains above 90% utilisation over the five-year forecast. Charleston Academy also experiences pressures within parts of its associated primary estate, whilst Inverness High School retains significant available capacity. These differing capacity positions provide important context for future planning considerations. A summary of current and forecast school roll and capacity information is provided at **Appendix 1**.

- 5.2 Current concerns raised by Members relate primarily to the Inverness Royal Academy and Millburn Academy Associated School Groups. These concerns reflect local issues relating to catchment arrangements, school capacity, forecast roll growth and placing request pressures. Officers therefore propose that initial review work focuses on these Associated School Groups before considering whether a wider review of Inverness catchment arrangements is required.
- 5.3 Officers recognise that capacity pressures also exist within parts of the Charleston Academy Associated School Group, including forecast pressures at a number of associated primary schools. These issues will continue to be monitored through established school roll forecasting, estate planning and capital planning processes. The proposed focus on the Inverness Royal Academy and Millburn Academy Associated School Groups reflects the specific concerns raised by Members and provides an opportunity to assess whether existing catchment arrangements continue to support the effective and sustainable use of school capacity in those areas. **Appendix 2** shows current catchment areas.
- 5.4 Concerns were raised by Members regarding the catchment arrangements specifically affecting Holm and Lochardil primary schools. Whilst these concerns relate to particular communities within the Associated School Group (ASG), officers consider the review should assess whether current catchment arrangements continue to make best use of available school capacity, reflect forecast housing growth and support sustainable pupil distribution across the whole ASG areas for Inverness Royal Academy and Millburn Academy.

6. Proposed Review

- 6.1 It is proposed to undertake further review work focused primarily on the Inverness Royal Academy and Millburn Academy Associated School Groups. The review will consider primary and secondary catchment arrangements within these Associated School Groups, together with the relationship between associated primary schools and their secondary school destinations.
- 6.2 The review would consider:
- Current and forecast school rolls.
 - School capacities and utilisation levels.
 - Housing growth and planned developments.
 - Placing request patterns.
 - Associated school group arrangements.
 - Travel patterns and community links.

- Existing catchment boundaries.

- 6.3 As part of this work, officers will also consider the extent to which existing catchment arrangements reflect significant physical features, community links and travel patterns within the city. This will include consideration of the River Ness as one of the principal geographical features within Inverness and whether it provides a useful reference point when assessing existing catchment arrangements.
- 6.4 The purpose of the review is not to predetermine any changes to catchment boundaries. Rather, it is intended to establish whether current arrangements continue to provide the most effective use of available school capacity and support sustainable long-term educational planning across Inverness or whether alternative arrangements should be considered.
- 6.5 The findings of the review will be brought back to a follow-up Members' seminar together with any recommended next steps, including whether there would be a requirement to commence statutory consultation on any proposed catchment amendment. Following this, a report will be brought to Committee for formal Member consideration.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 20 July 2026

Author: Derek Martin, Strategic Lead- Operations

Background Papers:

Appendices: Appendix 1 – School Roll Forecasts
Appendix 2 – Catchment Maps

Inverness Secondary School Roll Forecast and Capacity Summary

Secondary School	Capacity	2025/26 Roll	2025/26 Utilisation	Forecast Peak Roll	Peak Utilisation
Millburn Academy	1,195	1,231	103%	1,231	103%
Inverness Royal Academy	1,452	1,341	92%	1,366	94%
Charleston Academy	786	714	91%	722	92%
Culloden Academy	1,330	1,107	83%	1,120	84%
Inverness High School	677	487	72%	487	72%

Source: [School Roll Forecasts](#)

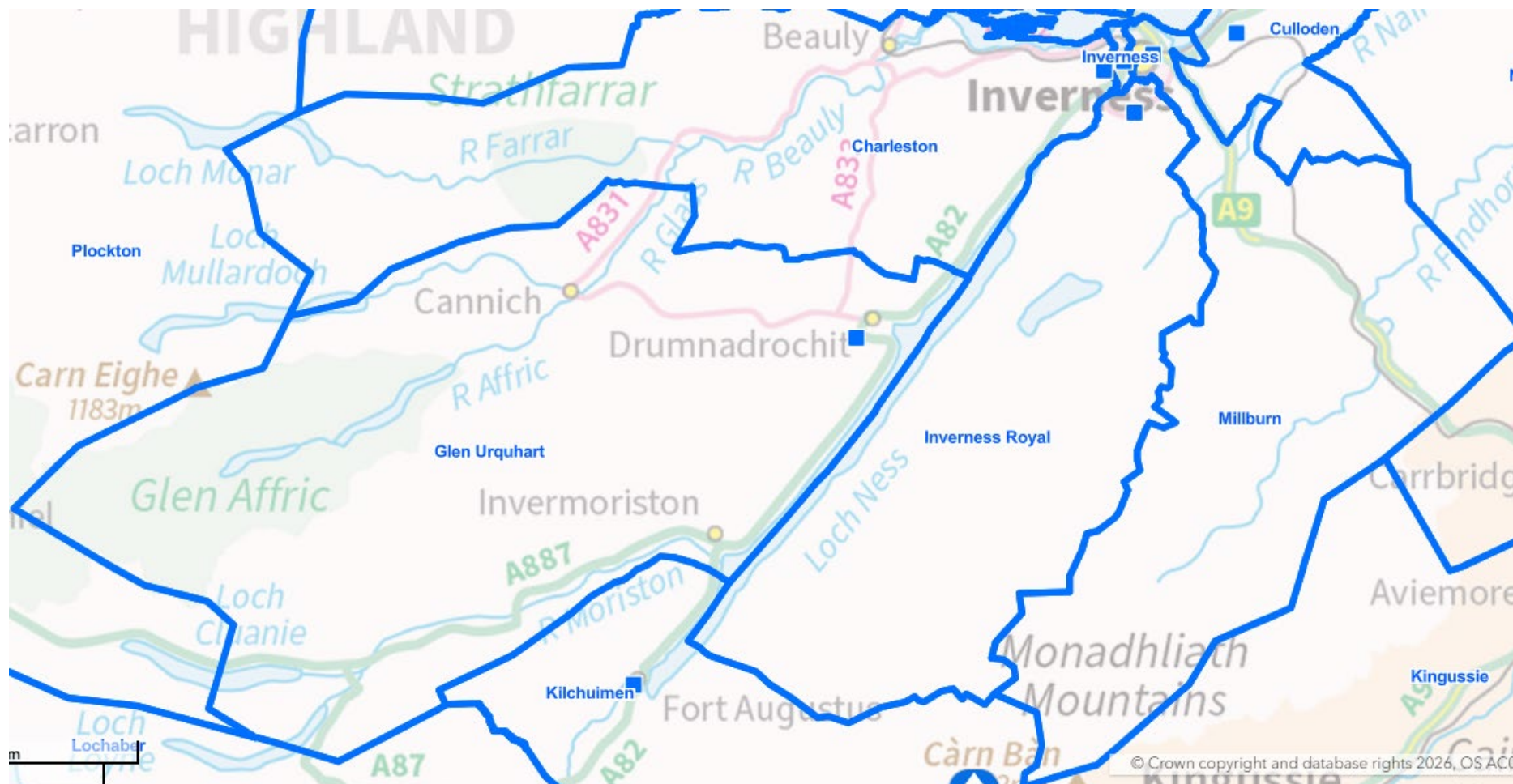
Commentary

Current school roll forecasts demonstrate differing capacity positions across Inverness Associated School Groups. Millburn Academy is forecast to operate above capacity in the short term until academic session 2027-28, while Inverness Royal Academy remains above 90% utilisation over a five-year forecast. Charleston Academy also remains above 90% utilisation in the short term, whilst Culloden Academy has capacity available and Inverness High School retains significant spare capacity throughout the forecast period. These differing capacity positions provide important context for future educational planning and consideration of catchment arrangements.

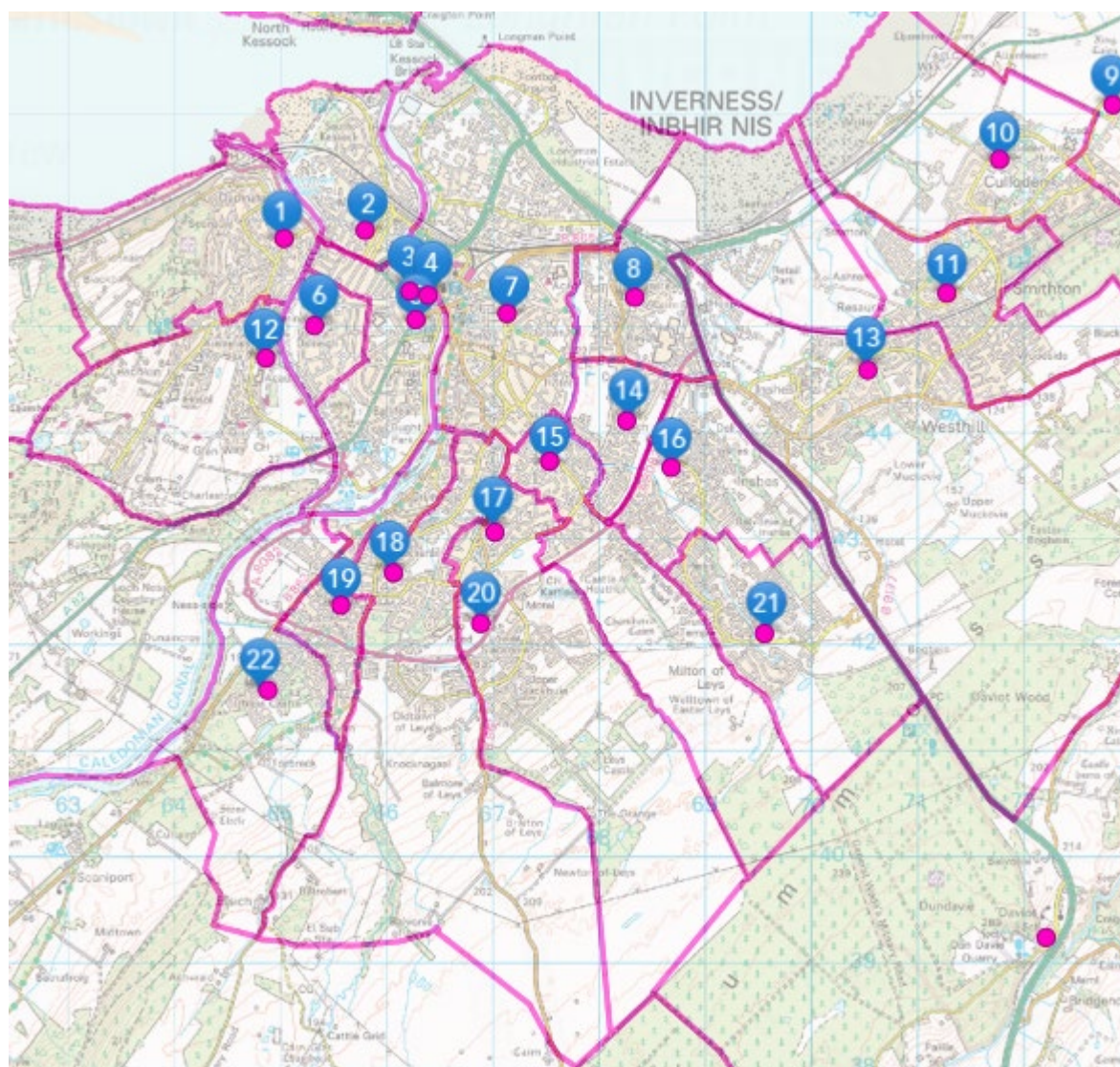
Primary school capacity positions vary across Inverness and the wider Associated School Groups, with some schools operating close to or above capacity whilst others retain available accommodation. These variations are considered through the Council's ongoing school roll forecasting, estate planning and capital planning processes. Detailed school roll forecasts for individual primary and secondary schools are available through the Council's published School Roll Forecast documentation and have informed the analysis contained within this report.

Catchment Maps

2.1 Inverness Secondary Schools Catchment Areas



2.2 Inverness City URBAN Primary Catchment Areas



NO	PRIMARY SCHOOL
1.	MUIRTOWN
2.	MERKINCH
3.	BISHOP EDEN'S
4.	ST JOSEPH'S
5.	CENTRAL
6.	DALNEIGH
7.	CROWN
8.	RAIGMORE
9.	BALLOCH
10.	DUNCAN FORBES
11.	SMITHTON
12.	KINMYLIES
13.	CRADLEHALL
14.	DRAKIES
15.	HILTON
16.	INSHES
17.	CAULDEEN
18.	LOCARDIL
19.	HOLM
20.	BUN-SGOIL GHÀIDHLIG INBHIR NIS
21.	MILTON OF LEYS
22.	NESS CASTLE