

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services
DATE	25 November 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Dyce and Bucksburn - School Catchment Areas
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/25/265
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Stephen Booth
REPORT AUTHOR	Andrew Jones
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1, 1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the outcomes of recent discussions with officers at Aberdeenshire Council, relating to proposals for making changes to school catchment areas for Dyce Academy and Dyce School, along with recommendations for next steps.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the outcomes of officers' recent discussions with colleagues at Aberdeenshire Council, relating to proposals for making changes to school catchment areas for Dyce Academy and Dyce School;
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to commence planning, in collaboration with Aberdeenshire Council, for a statutory public consultation to be held in Winter 2026/27, on proposals to adjust the catchment area boundaries for Dyce Academy and Dyce School, so that they align with the boundary line for the City, and with a view to these changes being implemented from August 2027;
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to review the catchment areas for all schools within the Bucksburn and Dyce Associated Schools Groups (ASGs), in light of the proposed alignment of the Dyce Academy and Dyce School catchment areas to the City boundary, and to draft proposals for any required further changes to catchment areas, to achieve an appropriate balance of pupil numbers within all schools in these ASGs in future years;
- 2.4 Instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to report back to the Committee with details of all proposed catchment area changes and recommendations for statutory public consultation on these, as part of the annual School Estate Plan update report in Autumn 2026.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 As shown in the maps at Appendices A and B, the catchment areas for Dyce Academy and Dyce School currently extend beyond the City boundary line and into Aberdeenshire. The Dyce Academy catchment area encompasses the Aberdeenshire communities of Newmachar and Kingseat, whilst the Dyce School catchment area covers a smaller area of Aberdeenshire, south of Newmachar.
- 3.2 At its meeting of 24 June 2025, after considering an outline business case on options for future secondary education provision at Dyce and Bucksburn, the Committee instructed officers to consult with colleagues at Aberdeenshire Council, on a proposal for the catchment area for Dyce Academy to be adjusted to align with the City boundary, therefore removing all parts of Aberdeenshire from the school's catchment area, and to report back to the Committee on the outcomes of these discussions.

Dyce Academy

- 3.3 Aligning the Dyce Academy catchment area boundary with the City boundary would mean that secondary school aged children living in the Aberdeenshire communities of Newmachar and Kingseat would no longer be entitled to a place at Dyce Academy, and so there would be a requirement for Aberdeenshire Council to include these communities within a catchment area for an alternative secondary school in Aberdeenshire.
- 3.4 The changes to the Dyce Academy catchment area were proposed in order to help free up pupil capacity at the school, which could subsequently be used to rebalance pupil numbers between it and Bucksburn Academy, where the pupil roll is expected to exceed available capacity in future years.
- 3.5 Discussions between officers at Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council took place during Summer 2025, in which Aberdeenshire Council colleagues confirmed they would be willing to propose making changes to the catchment area for an identified Aberdeenshire secondary school, so that this could accommodate the communities of Newmachar and Kingseat. This would make it possible for the Dyce Academy catchment area boundary to be realigned with the City boundary.

Dyce Primary School

- 3.6 During discussions with Aberdeenshire officers it was agreed that, if the proposed changes to the Dyce Academy catchment area were to go ahead, it would be necessary also to make changes to the boundary line of the catchment area for Dyce (Primary) School, which currently also extends into Aberdeenshire, so that this also aligns with the City boundary.
- 3.7 As shown at Appendix B, the Dyce School catchment area extends into a smaller area of Aberdeenshire than that of Dyce Academy, and the Aberdeenshire land included in the Dyce School catchment area is mostly rural, with only a small number of residential properties within it. Any primary school aged children living within these properties are currently entitled to a place at Dyce School (and also Dyce Academy), whilst other primary aged children living in the wider area of Newmachar and Kingseat would be entitled to a place at New Machar School in Aberdeenshire, and Dyce

Academy. New Machar School is part of the Inverurie CSN (Community Schools Network) in Aberdeenshire.

- 3.8 If changes were to be made to the Dyce Academy catchment area to align it with the City boundary, without making similar changes to the Dyce School catchment area, this is likely to create some confusion for families in the future, as it would mean that children living in the area of Aberdeenshire highlighted in Appendix B would be entitled to a place at Dyce School, but not at Dyce Academy, and they may therefore be required to move to a different secondary school to the rest of their peers at the end of their P7 year.
- 3.9 Aberdeenshire Council colleagues therefore agreed that, alongside proposals for changes to the secondary school catchment areas, it would be appropriate to propose a change to the Dyce School catchment area, so that the rural area of land in Aberdeenshire (highlighted in Appendix B) is in future included in the New Machar School catchment area, and not the Dyce School catchment area, thus realigning the Dyce School catchment area with the City boundary.

Statutory Consultations

- 3.10 It was also agreed that, given the proposals would be very closely linked, the required statutory public consultations on proposed changes to the Dyce Academy and Dyce School catchment areas (to be led by Aberdeen City Council), and on proposed changes to the New Machar School and identified Aberdeenshire secondary school catchment areas (to be led by Aberdeenshire Council), should be held at the same time, to give stakeholders in all affected schools and communities the opportunity to consider the full extent of the proposed changes, and to provide their feedback on these at the same time, to one or both Councils.
- 3.11 Officers at both Councils agreed that the optimum timing for the implementation of changes to the catchment areas would be from August 2027, and that the required statutory public consultations should therefore ideally take place in late 2026 or early 2027.
- 3.12 It is therefore recommended that officers are instructed to commence planning for a statutory public consultation, in collaboration with officers at Aberdeenshire Council, on the proposals to adjust the catchment areas for both Dyce Academy and Dyce School, so that they align with the City boundary, with a view to the consultation being undertaken in Winter 2026/27, and if approved following the consultations, for the changes to take effect from August 2027.

Further catchment area proposals

- 3.13 As highlighted above and in the outline business case reported to the Committee in June 2025, the proposals for the above initial changes to the Dyce Academy catchment area are intended to free up capacity at the school, which could be used subsequently to help alleviate forecast future pressure on space at Bucksburn Academy. This would be achieved by altering the boundary line between the catchment areas for the two schools, so that areas of land currently included within the Bucksburn Academy catchment area, instead become part of the Dyce Academy catchment area. Over time, the result of this would be a reduction in pupil numbers at

Bucksburn Academy, and an increase in pupil numbers at Dyce Academy, thus balancing pupil numbers more evenly across the two schools.

- 3.14 Any realignment of catchment areas for the two secondary schools would also impact on one or more primary schools within the Bucksburn and Dyce Associated Schools Groups (ASGs), as it would be desirable to ensure that P7 cohorts have the opportunity to move to the same secondary school together, rather than being zoned to different secondary schools. It may therefore be necessary to make some adjustments to primary school catchment areas, so that they remain in alignment with the secondary school catchment areas.
- 3.15 Given that Stoneywood School is located in the northern part of the Bucksburn Academy catchment area and is closest to Dyce Academy, and given that Dyce School is the only City primary school within the Dyce ASG, these two schools would likely be impacted most by changes to the secondary school catchment areas.
- 3.16 The pupil roll at Dyce School is currently at around 73% of the school's planning capacity, and forecasts indicate that pupil numbers there are likely to continue falling over the next eight years, to around 64% of available capacity by 2032. In contrast, pupil numbers at Stoneywood School currently exceed the school's planning capacity, and the school is expected to remain over capacity until at least 2032.
- 3.17 There may therefore be an opportunity to make adjustments to the catchment areas for these primary schools, alongside changes to the secondary school catchment areas, to help balance pupil numbers between the two schools, and help to relieve pressure on space at Stoneywood School, whilst also minimising any excess unused capacity at Dyce School.
- 3.18 Further work is required to assess what further catchment area changes could be made to achieve a better balance of pupil numbers in the primary and secondary schools in these ASGs in future, should the proposed adjustment of the Dyce catchment areas to align with the city boundary go ahead.
- 3.19 It is therefore recommended that officers are instructed to undertake a review of all catchment areas in the Dyce and Bucksburn ASGs, and to report back to the Committee with recommendations as appropriate, as part of the School Estate Plan update report in Autumn 2026.
- 3.20 Any proposals to make changes to school catchment areas would be subject to statutory public consultation, prior to any decisions to implement changes being made. Where changes to catchment areas are made, any pupils affected by the changes would be entitled to remain at their current school; they would not be expected to move to a new school as a result of a change in the catchment areas. Similarly, younger siblings of children already attending an affected school when changes are implemented, and who find they are no longer living in the catchment area for that school as a result of the changes, would be entitled to attend the same school as their older brother or sister, in order to keep family groups together.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The proposed reviews of school catchment areas would be undertaken using existing staffing resources.
- 4.2 If a decision is taken following statutory consultation to proceed with the realignment of catchment areas, so that pupils living in the affected areas of Aberdeenshire in future attend a school in Aberdeenshire and not Aberdeen City, then the per capita funding which the Council currently receives from Scottish Government to assist with the cost of the education of these pupils, will instead be paid to Aberdeenshire Council, and the overall per capita funding paid to Aberdeen City would be reduced. The total reduction in per capita funding, following full implementation of catchment area changes after six years (i.e. after all existing pupils who live in Aberdeenshire have left the school), is estimated at £20k per year.
- 4.3 If the proposed changes to catchment areas do not go ahead, it is likely that work would be required to extend Dyce Academy, to provide additional space and allow a rebalancing of pupil numbers between Bucksburn Academy and Dyce Academy. Such work would require a significant capital investment, for which no budget has been identified. The proposed catchment area changes which would reduce the numbers of pupils attending Dyce Academy, and allow the rebalancing of pupil numbers to go ahead, would remove the requirement for this significant expenditure.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that it shall be the duty of every education authority to secure that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education.
- 5.2 Section 17 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that it shall be the duty of an education authority in the performance of their functions under sections 1 to 6 of the Act, to provide for their area, sufficient accommodation in public schools and other educational establishments under their management to enable them to perform their said functions. In addition, an education authority shall maintain and keep efficient every public school, and other educational establishment under their management, and shall from time to time provide such additional accommodation as may be necessary to enable them to perform their functions under the Act and may, provide, alter, improve, enlarge, equip and maintain schools and other educational establishments within their area.
- 5.3 A proposal to make changes to a school, including changes to catchment areas or closing, relocating or opening a school, is subject to consultation in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. Formal consultations will require to be carried out for any proposals to make changes to the catchment areas for Dyce Academy and Bucksburn Academy, and consideration of this has been given in the recommendations arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified			
Compliance	Failure to plan effectively for education provision leading to the Council being unable to fulfil its duty to make adequate and efficient education provision	The recommended option as set out within the business case would help to ensure that adequate and efficient education provision for Dyce and Bucksburn will be in place for the foreseeable future	L	Yes
Operational	Proposed changes to catchment areas don't provide sufficient re-balancing of pupil numbers	Any changes to catchment areas would be designed to rebalance pupil numbers according to the latest available forecasts, however there would remain a risk that the desired changes are not realised immediately. Other short term mitigating actions may therefore be required to address any further lack of capacity at either school.	M	Yes
Financial	No significant risks identified			

Reputational	Failure to engage with stakeholders (including Aberdeenshire Council) on the planned changes to the school catchment areas could lead to reputational damage for the Council.	Ongoing dialogue and planning with Aberdeenshire colleagues and engagement with staff, parents and pupils at the appropriate stage of the project	L	Yes
Environmental/Climate	No significant risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>Council Delivery Plan 2024</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The recommendations within this report support the delivery of the following policy statements:</p> <p>A City of Opportunity</p> <p>Policy Statement 2 - Review and invest in our school estate, ensuring all of Aberdeen's schools are fit for the educational needs and the challenges of the 21st century. The report presents options for balancing pupil numbers and ensuring schools in Bucksburn and Dyce can operate within their available capacity.</p>
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Prosperous People: The project will support Stretch Outcome 8 in the LOIP - 100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/disabilities will experience a positive destination." Ensuring sufficient capacity and resources across our school estate will support pupil needs and positive destinations.
Community Empowerment Stretch Outcomes	The report and proposed future consultation support the delivery of Stretch Outcome 16 in the LOIP – 50% of people report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026.
Regional and City Strategies	This project forms part of the School Estate Plan which will support the delivery of the Council's Property and Estates Strategy and the Net Zero Routemap for Aberdeen City.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Previous Integrated Impact Assessment relating to the Bucksburn and Dyce secondary education provision Outline Business Case has been reviewed and changes made
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	No other assessments required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Education and Children's Services Committee, 24 June 2025: Agenda Item 14: [Bucksburn and Dyce Long Term Secondary School Provision: Outline Business Case](#).

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A: Secondary School Catchment Areas
- 11.2 Appendix B: Primary School Catchment Areas

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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