Summarised inspection findings

Millburn Academy

The Highland Council

3 June 2025

Key contextual information

School Name: Millburn Academy
Council: The Highland Council
SEED number: 5142830
Roll: 1223

Millburn Academy is located in the town of Inverness in The Highland Council. In September 2022, 6.9% of young people lived in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. In February 2022, 8.1% of young people were registered for free school meals. The headteacher has been in post since 2024 and is supported by five full-time depute headteachers. Attendance is generally in line with the national average. Exclusions are generally above the national average. The school reports that there has been a significant reduction in recent exclusion figures.

In September 2024, the school reported that 44% of pupils had additional support needs.

1.3 Leadership of change	good

This indicator focuses on collaborative leadership at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which is meaningful and relevant to the context of the school within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and linked to effective self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure the need for change is well understood and that the pace of change is appropriate to ensure the desired positive impact for learners. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher identified the need to refresh the school vision and values as a key priority. It was important to stakeholders that these accurately reflected the context of the school. Senior leaders have identified respect as being a value that has emerged during initial engagement with stakeholders. Almost all young people and staff demonstrate this value through their everyday interactions. As a result, learning takes place in calm and respectful environments. The vision has a positive impact on practice and provides a clear sense of direction for the school community.

- The headteacher provides clear, strategic leadership to the school community. Staff have confidence in her judgement, and most are supportive of the changes that have been made since her appointment. Senior leaders' remits have changed this session. Remits now support a more strategic approach to improvement planning and are more closely aligned to key school improvement priorities. This is supporting senior leaders to be more strategic in their role. Sharing of knowledge and good practice across the team is beginning to have a positive impact on outcomes for young people. The headteacher and the leadership team should continue to develop their strategic roles and leadership capacity across the school. This will ensure that school improvement is taken forward at an increased pace.

- Senior leaders have introduced a refreshed approach to school improvement planning, moving from a three-year to a one-year plan. This has been well-received by staff and is beginning to lead to a brisker pace of change. Senior leaders consult with staff regarding the draft School Improvement Plan (SIP) which clearly reflect local and national priorities. There is now scope for senior leaders to work closely with staff and other key stakeholders to identify key priorities at an earlier part of this process. This will ensure a more collaborative approach. The school produces an annual standards and quality report to share with parents and key stakeholders. Department Improvement Plans (DIPs) mirror SIP priorities and this ensures a coherent and shared vision of school improvement. The quality of DIPs is variable, and senior leaders should consider sharing examples of good practice to provide consistency across departments.

- Senior leaders and almost all staff are fully aware of the social, economic, and cultural context of the school. All staff have a good understanding of closing the poverty related attainment gap. There is careful monitoring of the progress made by targeted individuals and cohorts of young people, who face barriers to their learning. Senior leaders have developed a clear plan for the spend of their allocated Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to best support young people who are impacted by financial disadvantage. Senior leaders share plans for PEF with Parent Council members. There is scope to involve parents in more meaningful, open consultation for identifying priorities.

- Positive change includes more effective and robust self-evaluation processes across the school. These are evident through quality assurance activities and departmental collaboration. To ensure the impact of change, key areas such as learning and teaching, meeting learners needs, wellbeing and raising attainment are monitored effectively. This also enables senior and middle leaders to monitor carefully an appropriate pace of change. Activities include learning walks, observations and professional dialogue. These approaches to improvement enable positive changes to be sustained and built upon.

- A majority of department plans contain strategic, measurable targets set out using clear, evaluative language to highlight improvement journeys. Almost all middle leaders work closely and effectively with colleagues to identify areas of department improvement that align with the SIP. In most departments, improvement priorities are discussed regularly at department meetings which helps monitor progress against priorities. Middle leaders create helpful mid-year reports that reflect progress on improvement priorities.

- Teachers at all levels are proactive in participating in working groups that are focused on areas of school priority. This helps to facilitate leadership at all levels and support a consistent drive for improvement and change. A minority of staff feel that they have the opportunity to lead on projects. There is scope for more staff to take on leadership roles and develop a greater understanding of self-evaluation for improvement.

- All teaching staff participate in annual professional review and development linked well to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) professional standards. Staff identify areas of their own professional development that will support department improvement priorities and reflect SIP priorities. Staff are supported well through structured professional learning. This is also used to help facilitate leadership at all levels. Senior leaders have created a calendar of professional learning activities to support staff by sharing good practice. Staff welcome opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and place high value on the quality of such professional learning activities. Staff are encouraged to participate in external professional learning and a few staff work with external exam bodies.

- There is a well-established pupil council with representatives from all year groups who meet regularly with senior leaders. Young people provide feedback on improvement priorities. Senior pupil council members lead pupil working groups which are aligned to school improvement priorities. This is supporting young people to think critically and creatively. They are able to respond well to change and share information well with their peers. They share ideas and developments from the working groups through assemblies, presentations to parents and to staff. Senior leaders should consider how to share the work of the pupil council more regularly with the wider pupil body.

- Young people and staff on the learning and teaching working group co-created the "Millburn Lesson Standard." This has been well received across the school community. Young people discuss readily the positive impact this is having in their lessons. Across the school, only a minority of young people feel that senior leaders and staff take their views into account when making changes. Staff should consider ways to empower young people further to support improvements across the school.

- Senior leaders and staff with responsibility for Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) have developed a clear vision for DYW priorities and have shared this effectively with staff. There are clear actions in the SIP to support the development of skills and these are reflected within almost all DIPs.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

■ learning and engagement
■ quality of teaching
■ effective use of assessment
■ planning, tracking and monitoring

■ Staff and young people enjoy very positive relationships.This is a strength of the school and impacts positively on the experiences of young people. Staff have worked very effectively to ensure a safe and respectful climate for learning. Almost all interactions between staff and young people are supportive and built on high expectations and mutual respect. In almost all lessons there is a calm and purposeful learning environment where young people are motivated to learn. Most young people indicate that it is easy to ask questions, seek advice and get help. Almost all young people are well behaved, courteous and are proud of their school.

■ All teachers report that senior leaders have ensured a sustained focus on pedagogy across the school. There are numerous opportunities for professional learning through the work of the 'strategic and operational learning and teaching groups.' Collaborative working enables discussion and sharing of practice related to learning, teaching and assessment (LTA). Teachers are using the recently launched 'Millburn Lesson Standard' to provide a consistent and clear structure to how they plan and deliver learning experiences. There is a range of quality assurance activities in place to carefully monitor the impact of developments in LTA. An extensive programme of targeted career long professional learning (CLPL) in planned collegiate time, supports staff to share good practice. For example, lesson 'sprints' within departments. Young people's views are also sought routinely as part of the school's ongoing self-evaluation of learning and teaching. The school is now well placed to embed further the features of highly effective practice outlined in the Millburn Lesson Standard. This will ensure that all young people continue to receive consistently high-quality learning and teaching across the curriculum.

■ Most young people engage well with tasks provided by their teachers. Most teachers demonstrate an understanding of young people's individual needs and consider what tasks and activities will support them to make the best possible progress. In most lessons, young people learn in a variety of ways, including collaborative learning, peer work and direct teaching. There are a few opportunities for young people to experience learning in different contexts, including the outdoor learning experiences in S1. In a few lessons, young people experience choice in how they learn, and benefit from opportunities to lead aspects of their own learning. Young people would welcome more opportunities to develop further their responsibility and independence in lessons. In a majority of lessons, learning takes place at an appropriate pace and young people undertake tasks and activities that are appropriately challenging.

■ In almost all lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear. High-quality discussion in lessons between young people and their teachers, and between young people working in groups, helps most learners to develop their knowledge and understanding. In the majority of lessons, staff use questioning well to check young people's understanding and recall prior learning. In a few lessons, teachers use questioning skilfully to support young people to think

more deeply about their learning and to develop their higher- order thinking skills. This is an area for further development across most departments.

- Most teachers have a clear structure to their lessons. They share the purpose of learning and in the majority of lessons this is linked appropriately to discussion with young people about successful learning. Teachers have recently focused on being clearer about the purpose of learning, supported by the learning and teaching working group. In a minority of lessons, the identification of success for young people is too focused on the completion of tasks rather than on how young people demonstrate progress in their learning. A next step should be to involve young people more fully in contributing to success criteria so that they can measure their own progress in lessons.

- Most teachers use well-considered activities routinely at the beginning of lessons to engage young people well in learning. In a few examples, these activities provide learners with an opportunity to make links between prior and current learning. Teachers should make more effective use of plenaries to support young people to reflect on the success of their learning.

- All young people benefit from having their own digital device. Most departments are using digital technology in increasingly creative and wide-ranging ways to enhance enjoyment and independence in learning. This enables young people to access a range of resources such as class notes, presentations, assignments and feedback both in class and at home. Almost all young people use their device to submit home learning or other pieces of work. Young people appreciate the opportunity to use these platforms to support their independent study. Senior leaders and staff should continue to share effective practice to further support embedding digital technology in lessons.

- Most staff know young people very well as learners and understand their needs. A majority of teachers provide universal support effectively to meet the learning needs of young people in their classes. They use a range of techniques, including discreet digital strategies, to support young people effectively in their learning. In a few examples, teachers plan very well to meet the needs of individual young people who require additional support with their learning. Senior leaders should now continue to share effective practice in meeting the needs of all young people through the inhouse CLPL programme. This includes supporting young people with additional support needs and those who require more challenge in their learning.

- A minority of teachers make effective use of formative assessment strategies to assess learning within the classroom and to inform lesson planning. Approaches to assessment are variable across the school, particularly in the Broad General Education (BGE). All teachers should build on examples of effective practice available in a few subjects. They should ensure that they use day-to-day assessment evidence to plan tasks and activities set at the correct level of difficulty for all learners, particularly in the BGE.

- A few teachers understand well the moderation cycle and how to moderate planning as well as outcomes for young people. An important next step is to ensure there is an increased emphasis on the quality and regularity of moderation activities, particularly in the BGE. This should cover the learning, teaching and assessment cycle. In the senior phase, almost all teachers engage in supportive verification activities with colleagues to ensure national standards are applied. Teachers are supported further within the school by a few colleagues who have taken on Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) responsibilities within their subject area. Teachers have a clearer understanding of national assessment standards for learners in the senior phase as a result of this work.

■ In most classes, teachers provide encouraging verbal feedback through informal learning conversations with young people. Most young people are aware of the level they are working at and what they need to do to improve their learning. A minority of young people benefit from highly-effective individual discussions with teachers following on from summative assessments. This is stronger in the senior phase. This practice should be further embedded across the school.

■ At departmental level, a minority of teachers track well the progress of young people to inform and support their judgements around the achievement of a level and to plan future learning. This information is then integrated into the whole- school tracking and monitoring system where departmental information can be accessed by staff across the curriculum to inform planning and support the delivery of appropriate interventions. This practice should be embedded more widely across the school. Middle and senior leaders are able increasingly able to monitor the progress of groups of learners effectively. This will support a greater number of young people who will benefit from more appropriate interventions and supports.

■ Senior leaders and principal teachers have increased their learning pathway offer. Young people learn across the four contexts of the curriculum, resulting in positive outcomes in attainment and achievement. Senior leaders are reviewing learning pathways to close gaps and ensure learners are best prepared for learning, life and work. Senior leaders should articulate strategically what constitutes their learning pathway offer, next steps and how pathways will be evaluated systematically. As a high priority, there should be greater clarity on how national expectations and entitlements are met. This is critical in supporting young people and their parents/carers in making well-informed choices. Senior leaders should ensure they encourage consistently a clear understanding of the curriculum being the totality of young people's learning.

■ Senior leaders gather data only on young people's attainment in literacy and numeracy as young people move from primary to the secondary stages. All subject teachers should be clearer on what constitutes effective progression across the BGE. They should engage in high quality joint 3-15 planning. In the majority of cases, teachers can make more use of the design principles of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

■ Almost all young people know how learning pathways develop capacities, skills and promote creativity. Young people can learn in a planned way in the outdoors. This includes an opportunity in S3 to study for The Duke of Edinburgh Award. Senior leaders should deepen and connect young people's learning across S1-3 into the senior phase using interdisciplinary learning and cross curricular themes. Senior leaders plan to raise staff's awareness of the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) Professional Standards references to learning for sustainability. They should also raise awareness of how the GTCS professional standards relate to Gaelic, and how Gaelic and learning for sustainability can be integrated as cross cutting themes.

■ Young people make choices at several points in their learning pathways to enable specialisation. Senior leaders should consistently use grouping of subjects within curricular areas to ensure coverage in line with national guidance. Teachers are not all clear of the purpose of S3 in completing the entitlement to a broad general education, including all of the experiences and outcomes to third level, across all curriculum areas. Staff need also to be encouraging specialisation and extending learning into fourth curriculum level as part of learning in S3. Young people are not able to commence learning a new subject in S4.

■ The school is at the early stages of developing a clear, shared and planned approach to developing and accessing literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as a responsibility for all. The school library is not currently staffed. Some interim arrangements are in place until a full-time librarian appointment is made.

■ Young people need to receive their entitlements to physical education, religious moral education and a 1+2 Approach to Languages. Future planning of languages needs to take account of the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017. This is to enable young people who wish to begin and continue their learning of Gaelic throughout the broad general education and senior phase. Young people need to receive their full CfE entitlements as an important priority.

■ Across the senior phase, young people are able to study a wide range of subjects including well-structured programmes, vocational pathways, qualifications and awards. Senior leaders should continue to ensure that young people maximise learning in S6. Young people may opt

for a positive range of flexible learning, for example, foundation apprenticeships, and college and online courses. Staff show a clear understanding of DYW through embedding priorities across the curriculum. A next step is to make more effective use of local work opportunities. Senior leaders identify a few areas to address in future timetabling to improve the quality of delivering learning pathways.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on learners – parental engagement

- Most parents feel that they receive helpful, regular feedback about how their child is progressing. They appreciate the termly newsletter about school events which celebrates young people's achievements and successes. A few parents would appreciate further detail within reports, particularly in their child's next steps in learning. This would enable them to support their child's learning at home better.

- The Parent Council works well in partnership with senior leaders to support school improvement. They value the headteacher reports about the development of school priorities. A next step would be to ensure that the wider parent body are fully involved in consultations about improvement priorities. Senior leaders should now continue their efforts to recruit more parents onto the Parent Council, from all catchment areas to ensure a broader representation.

- Most parents feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions, suggestions or to address any concerns. Most parents feel that staff know their child well and support their wellbeing. Most feel that the school is well led and that senior leaders know and understand their young people.

- Parents appreciate the support provided by senior leaders and staff during subject choice and welcome the option of online or in-person information sessions. A majority of parents would welcome further workshops, opportunities for family learning and advice on how to further support their child's learning at home.

2.1 Safeguarding

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, young people. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	good

This indicator focuses on the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of every individual. A clear focus on ensuring wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all learners to maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- ■ wellbeing
- ■ fulfilment of statutory duties
- ■ inclusion and equality

■ Strong, trusting relationships between staff and young people underpin a calm, purposeful ethos across the school. Young people are polite, confident and respectful. Most young people feel they are treated fairly and with respect and that school helps them to understand and respect others. Professional learning on nurture, trauma and wellbeing is supporting the continuing development of a caring school culture.

■ Most young people find staff approachable and feel that there are staff who know them well as individuals and who they can speak to if they are upset or worried. As a result, most young people feel safe, well supported and cared for in school.

■ Most young people who require it, are directed effectively to mental health supports by guidance staff. This supports them well to improve their emotional wellbeing and resilience. Most young people do not yet demonstrate a strong understanding of all of the wellbeing indicators. Senior leaders and pastoral staff should consider how they track and monitor the wellbeing of all learners to help inform a more strategic approach to wellbeing. Learners would benefit from increased clarity about the types of support available to them. This will enable them to understand the ways in which they are able to access appropriate supports to improve their wellbeing.

■ Young people benefit from a weekly check in with their guidance teacher during Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons from S1 to S6. The school as planned should review and update their PSE programme for S1 to S4 to ensure that it is more relevant for young people and progressive so that young people build more effectively on their prior learning.

■ The revised Promoting Positive Relationships Policy is helping to ensure that all young people understand the expectations of them as learners. The policy, including the merit system, promotes positive recognition and this is leading to young people feeling valued and motivated. This is reinforced regularly through assemblies, conversations and daily classroom routines.

■ Young people with additional support needs feel included and well supported. Staff identify young people requiring additional support through shared transition information, the use of data, and their knowledge of young people. Relevant information is shared regularly with all staff to ensure they are fully aware of the needs of the young people. When required, support plans for young people are in place with strategies embedded to inform and support staff to meet the needs of young people. These are monitored and regularly reviewed by support staff to evaluate their effectiveness. Staff should continue to develop their approaches to planning,

including how the voice of all young people who require support can be captured more regularly and robustly.

■ Attendance continues to be a priority for senior leaders and staff, and this is closely monitored. Young people who face barriers to learning and those who find full attendance to be an ongoing challenge are supported by a range of appropriate staff and key partners. As a result, attendance data is generally higher than the national average.

■ Guidance staff and year heads track carefully the progress of individual young people. This is resulting in identified individuals engaging with relevant planned interventions, leading to improved wellbeing. Care Experienced young people have their progress tracked using a recently introduced tracking model. This enables senior and middle leaders to offer appropriate support and challenge where appropriate. As a result, care experienced young people make appropriate progress in their learning. Senior leaders should develop this further and consider the use of the tracking data available to monitor more closely other groups of young people. For example, young people with caring responsibilities and those for whom English is an additional language.

■ Young people report that the recently implemented anti-bullying policy is clear and helping to reduce incidents of bullying. Their views were taken into account through consultation about its development. There are clear systems for reporting, recording and addressing incidents of bullying. Recorded incidents of bullying are low. Senior leaders should ensure that reported incidents are analysed to identify emerging patterns and common themes. This will allow a more strategic response in relation to planning for wellbeing.

■ Staff monitor attendance closely and there are clear processes in place for responding to attendance concerns. This includes reacting quickly to any issues in relation to vulnerable young people. The Breakfast Club and 'chill zone' provide calm, quiet spaces that help a few young people to self-regulate, feel safe and plan effectively for the day ahead. The inclusion lead for nurture supports young people facing barriers to engagement skilfully and this helps young people feel increasing levels of resilience and confidence. Staff regularly review plans for young people on part time timetables. Young people are succeeding in gaining qualifications and entering positive destinations through engagement with partners as part of flexible learning planning. Senior leaders should now ensure that all young people are receiving 27.5 hours of education provision given that a few are on part time timetables.

■ The school has significantly reduced exclusions. Clear expectations and processes are leading to increasing consistency of approach by staff in supporting behaviour. Guidance staff and depute heads use their knowledge of all learners to intervene proactively to reduce the risk of exclusion for individual young people. The school engages well with partners to support alternatives to exclusion.

■ All staff promote a culture of inclusion and are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to inclusion and equality. Young people accessing 'The Hub' attend classes with their peers. This is leading to young people feeling a strong sense of belonging. Staff feel more confident in supporting young people with additional needs and are beginning to adapt and develop courses to support greater access to the curriculum for these young people.

■ Young people who come to the school from other countries feel welcomed and included. Staff are developing a range to tools to support an increasing number of young people for whom English is not their main home language. By the time they leave school, young people for

whom English is an additional language achieve well in their literacy and numeracy at both level 4 and 5.

■ The Religious and Moral Education (RME) programme provides learners with planned opportunities to explore diversity and multi-faith issues. Learners would benefit from the opportunity to continue to explore these issues in RME beyond S2, in line with national guidance. Young people have opportunities to reflect on their views of equality and diversity in a few subject areas across the school, including PSE. Staff adjust subject content to challenge discrimination and prejudice. For example, staff in social subjects have amended texts to be more racially literate.

■ A next step for senior leaders is to develop a strategic overview of where learning about different cultures, religions, race and neurodiversity takes place, and how this promotes and celebrates diversity. Senior leaders should provide greater opportunities to celebrate diversity across the curriculum and through whole school events. This will support young people to recognise and challenge discrimination. The Equality and Diversity policy should be updated to reflect the UNCRC.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy
- In 2023/24, almost all young people achieved CfE third level or better in literacy by the end of S3. Most young people achieved CfE fourth level. In 2023/24, almost all young people achieved CfE third level or better in numeracy by the end of S3. Most achieved fourth level. Young people who require additional support are very well supported by a range of targeted interventions. These are supporting their progress towards achieving expected levels.

- Teachers leading on literacy and numeracy are currently developing more effective partnerships with associated primary schools to support moderation. This work should continue to be developed further to support staff to make reliable judgements about the progress of children and young people. Senior leaders and staff should develop a meaningful strategy to develop further the skills of all curricular staff to develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Senior phase
Leavers (literacy)
- Almost all young people leaving school between 2019/20 and 2023/24 achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better in literacy. Most young people leaving school in the same time period achieved SCQF level 5 or better although between 2020/21 to 2022/23, there is a decline. In the same time period, the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy. Performance in literacy is generally in line with the VC with a few exceptions.

- The majority of young people leaving school who have an additional support need achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy in 2021/22 and 2022/23. A minority of young people with additional support needs achieved level 6 in literacy which is generally above the VC. This is a positive picture with young people who have additional support needs making good progress in literacy over time.

- Staff are committed to ensuring that young people leave the school with an appropriate qualification in literacy and numeracy. Increased time in English and mathematics is supporting young people to maximise their attainment in these areas.

Cohorts (literacy)
- At S4, most young people achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy between 2019/20 and 2023/24. Most young people achieved level 5 or better. With the exception of 2022/23 when the majority of young people achieved at this level. This is in line with the VC over the last 5 years.

- By S5, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy from 2019/20 through to 2023/24. This shows a sustained picture of attainment at this level over time. A majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 or better from 2019/20 till 2022/23, with a decrease in 23/24 when a minority of young people achieved at this level. This is broadly in line with the VC.

- By S6, based on the S4 roll, most young people people achieved SCQF level 5 or better and the majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 or better from 2019/20 till 2023/24. This was broadly in line with the VC.

- The school has sustained levels of performance in literacy at SCQF levels 5 or better and level 6 or better over time.

Leavers (numeracy)
- The majority of young people leaving school between 2021/22 and 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. This is in line with the VC for 2021/22 and 2022/23, having been significantly lower than the VC in 2018/19 until 2020/21. A minority of young people leaving school achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This is significantly lower than the VC for 2022/23.

- A majority of young people leaving school who have an additional support need achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy and a minority achieved level 6 in two out of the last 5 years.

Cohorts (numeracy)
- At S4, the majority of young people achieved numeracy at SCQF level 5 or better in three out of the last five years. This shows an improvement in attainment for this cohort since 2019/2020. By S5, a minority attain SCQF level 6 which shows an improvement over the last five years from 2019/20 to 2023/24. By S6, a minority attain SCQF level 6 which has been significantly lower than the VC in two of the last five years.

National Qualifications
- Young people attain well in both National 5 (N5) English and National 5 (N5) Mathematics at S4. Attainment at this level is higher than national figure. Most young people who study English at Higher level at S5 and S6 achieve an A to C pass. This is in line with the national figure. In Mathematics, most young people achieve an A to C pass, which is higher than the national figure. Teachers are aware of the need to improve presentation rates in mathematics in S5 and the level of high-quality passes being attained at this stage.

Attainment over time
BGE
- By S3, almost all young people achieve CfE third level across their curricular choices. The majority achieve CfE fourth level. Senior leaders should now ensure that more robust and systematic moderation processes are in place to ensure the reliability of the professional judgements of all teaching staff about the progress of BGE learners. Close links established with colleagues from other schools should continue to be furrher developed to support this work.

Senior phase
Improving attainment for all
- When compared using average complementary tariff points, the attainment of young people leaving school between 2018/19 to 2022/23 is generally in line with the VC with a few exceptions. The attainment of all groups shows a decline from 2020/21 to 2022/23.

Cohorts

■ Using complementary tariff scores, at S4, by S5 and by S6 performance is generally in line with the VC over the last five years (2019/20 to 2023/24). Attainment over time shows an inconsistent pattern of improvement.

Breadth and Depth

■ At S4, the majority of young people achieve four or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better which is in line with the VC. The majority of young people achieve one or more award at SCQF level 5A or better, in line with the VC in each of the last five years. The percentage of young people achieving three or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better is significantly higher than the VC in 2023/24.

■ By S5, the majority of young people achieve two or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better in four out of the last five years. This is higher than the VC in 2022/23 and 2023/24. A minority of young people achieve one or more awards at level 6A or better. This is higher than the VC in 2019/20. This performance shows a decline over the past three years.

■ By S6, the majority of young people achieve two or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better. This is in line with the VC. . A minority of young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better. This was higher than the VC in 2020/21 A minority of young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better. A few young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 7A or better. This is significantly higher than the VC in 2023/24. Senior leaders should work to further develop the curricular offer in S6 to maximise the learning experiences, attainment and achievement of young people of all young people.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

■ A majority of young people are demonstrating skills and knowledge through participating in meaningful achievement activities, including clubs and sports within and out with the school. Senior leaders would benefit from using the Scottish Credit Qualification Framework to help map out the achievement offer and progression pathways. A minority of these young people are gaining accreditation for their achievement through recognised and well-established awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Saltire Award, Dynamic Youth Awards and Sport Leadership Awards. Young people can attain accreditation up to level six on the Scottish Credit Qualification Framework through their participation in these activities.

■ A few young people are demonstrating their skills working independently and leading regional and international activities and expeditions. Fundraising to support activities and trips is strong. A few young people are utilising their skills and experience gained from their trips to national sports venues to improve their work in curricular areas such as biology and in physical education.

■ The school has recently achieved Sports Scotland's gold sports award status. This award recognises schools that demonstrate a commitment to developing competition, participation in sport and building the capacity of staff and volunteers. A few activities are supported very well by a range of local and regional partners such as Active Schools, High Life Highland, community learning and development and the Scottish Football Association.

■ The school staff have introduced an online platform to record and track young people's skills development, including meta skills. Across all year groups, a significant number of young people have recorded their skills. Teamwork, creativity, innovation and reading are amongst the highest recorded skills. Although at an early stage, this data, alongside other intelligence, has the potential to help identify and target young people who are not participating. This

tracking also has the capacity to identify where there are skills gaps that require a sharper focus. A focus on those young people who have not uploaded their information will help to strengthen available data on skills development.

- Staff lead a wide variety of activities and clubs for young people. These are well received by young people who feel that their interests are represented. They are also confident to approach staff with ideas for new clubs as they feel that staff will do their best to meet these requests.

- The school uses a range of mechanisms very well to recognise and celebrate achievement. These include national awards, written feedback, notice boards, social media and annual awards ceremonies.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders use the school's Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) appropriately to support the wellbeing and learning of those young people most affected by poverty and those facing additional challenges. Interventions are carefully tracked to ensure they impact on young people's progress. Specific interventions support young people to re-engage with school, improve attendance and achieve successful outcomes.

- Young people with additional support needs are supported well and make good progress with their learning. The school has recently introduced measures to more robustly track and monitor the progress of those young people in receipt of free school meals. Additional resources and interventions have a clear focus on improving their attendance, engagement and attainment. Senior leaders should focus more directly on the attainment of young people who are care experienced in order to ensure that they achieve more positive outcomes.

- Senior leaders and staff are working with key partners in their efforts to close the attainment gap. Staff are proactive in supporting families to reduce the cost of the school day, by providing young people with access to equipment and personal items. PEF funding is also used to remove barriers to young people's participation in school events and trips. An established Breakfast Club enables young people to be more able and ready to learn.

- Attainment of leavers in SIMD 1 and 2 has been above the VC for the last three years. Attainment in SIMD 3 was significantly lower than the VC in 2022/23 compared to significantly higher in 2021/22. Senior leaders and staff should continue to develop and implement effective strategies to support these young people to attain and achieve.

- Almost all young people leave school to a positive destination, in line with the VC. Staff work well with partners such as Skills Development Scotland, local further and higher education partners and employers to ensure, positive and sustained destinations for leavers.

Context

The Enhanced Provision (Hub) specialist provision housed within Millburn Academy supports young people in Inverness who have a range of additional support needs. Young people are placed in the Hub through the Joint Admissions Group (JAG) and follow individualised BGE, and senior phase programmes based on their learning profiles. At the time of the inspection, forty-one young people attended, split into a range of class groupings across the BGE and senior phase. Most young people attend mainstream classes throughout the week. The Hub has had several leadership and staffing changes in the last few years. The Depute Head Teacher (DHT) of Additional Support Needs (ASN) is covering the remit of Principal teacher of the Hub. The principal teacher's role is currently vacant.

QI 1.3

Leadership of change

■ Across the Hub, staff consistently work effectively as a team, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for all young people. They understand young people's needs and circumstances well, providing strong support for both academic and personal development.

■ Almost all Hub staff articulate well areas of strength and the areas for improvement. Staffing changes and vacancies have slowed the pace of taking developments forward. The DHT is working more effectively with staff to review and prioritise improvements. This has fostered an ethos where staff and young people have improved opportunities to be heard and feel more able to influence change. Recent collaborative discussions for example have highlighted correctly the need to review the Hub's rationale. The DHT, in taking this forward, should ensure all staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to the Hub's function as a specialist provision and its place within the wider school community.

■ Quality assurance processes are in place to monitor and track the Hub's work. The Hub Department Improvement Plan (DIP) aligns well with whole school plans for improvement and provides a helpful framework to monitor progress. As planned, the DHT should continue providing strategic leadership to strengthen the Hub's rationale, develop approaches to assessment, improve curriculum pathways, and track more robustly the progress of all learners. In taking this forward the DIP should be developed further to provide clear measurable actions to be taken and how this will lead to improved attainment and achievement for all learners.

QI 2.3

Learning, teaching and assessment

■ Positive relationships between staff and young people are a key strength of the Hub. Relationships among young people are friendly and respectful, fostering collaboration and shared learning. This creates a calm, purposeful environment where young people feel included, safe and understood. Staff have a strong understanding of each young person's needs. Profiles support staff in both the Hub and mainstream school by providing insight into individual needs and effective strategies to support learning. Staff must ensure profiles are up to date and include the most relevant information to support learning and wellbeing.

■ Learning experiences are well-matched to young people's needs and are relevant and enjoyable. Most lessons promote independence and develop skills for learning and life. Young people understand the purpose of their learning and how to achieve success. They engage

enthusiastically, often leading aspects of their learning, making choices, and using digital tools to support their individual progress. Teachers and support staff use adaptive teaching strategies effectively to maintain focus and engagement. Teachers use modelling, scaffolding, questioning, and feedback skilfully to deepen understanding and sustain engagement. Timely feedback and praise help young people recognise and celebrate progress.

■ Teachers use a limited range of formative and summative assessments when evaluating how well young people are progressing in their understanding of learning. The DHT and staff should develop further their approaches to assessment. This will support teachers to plan learning consistency across the curriculum that builds on prior learning and supports their professional judgement. Teachers are beginning to engage in moderating learners' work in the BGE. Teachers are more confident in verifying and moderating learning at the senior phase. Senior leaders should work with staff to develop a shared understanding of the achievement of a CfE level and make greater use of the Milestones and benchmarks. This will ensure that assessment is robust and leads more effectively to the planning of the next steps in learning for young people.

■ Teachers use individual approaches to planning learning to provide young people with a broad and balanced curriculum. They use the experiences and outcomes set within CfE through a range of engaging activities and tasks, including real-life contexts. Led by senior leaders, teachers should develop a consistent approach to planning including how they plan for groups, classes, and individuals. They should ensure planning is of a consistent high quality and shows more clearly the focus for learning the skills and associated outcomes. The whole school's tracking system contains useful information about Hub learners progress in their curriculum. Tracking for young people operating at milestones and early levels of CfE should now be further enhanced. This will support senior leaders better in gathering more robust data to evidence their progress and wellbeing.

Learner pathways
■ Senior leaders recognise that the BGE curriculum needs to be developed further and include more detailed progression pathways for all areas of the curriculum. This will ensure that all young people have planned opportunities to progressively develop their knowledge and skills across all areas of the curriculum to maximise their attainment. Teachers are beginning to develop helpful progressive learning pathways in mathematics and English and have reviewed approaches to interdisciplinary learning to meet learners' individual needs better and raise engagement. Senior leaders should continue to develop the curriculum to ensure it is providing sufficient challenge to meet the demands of all young people.

■ At the senior phase staff have developed well meaningful opportunities for accreditation. This is strengthening choices and providing greater progression in the senior phase and support learners to maximise their number and range of achievement.

■ Senior leaders and teachers should continue to build on the opportunities young people have to extend their learning and skills in broader contexts. This will support them to better understand the relevance of their learning in and how it related to their development of skills for life.

QI 3.1

Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion

- Staff are very attentive to the wellbeing needs of all young people. Relationships across the Hub are positive and nurturing, creating a calm and purposeful learning environment. Staff work together well to provide appropriate care and support. As a result, young people feel safe, valued, and cared for.

- All young people access a relevant Health and Wellbeing curriculum tailored to their needs. This includes participation with mainstream peers, targeted hub interventions, and bespoke programmes. Staff work with a range of partners to deliver wellbeing initiatives, helping young people understand relevant current topics. These include safety, relationships, emotions, stranger danger, and home safety. In the senior phase, this curriculum leads to important accreditation in areas such as employability, personal development, cookery, and cycling. As a result, young people gain skills for life and make safer choices.

- Most young people consistently show friendship towards each other in the Hub and have extended their friendships across the mainstream school through attending mainstream classes. This is leading to young people building a sense of confidence where they feel they are an important member of the school community. The Hub is an integral part of the school. This ensures that no ceiling is placed on any young person as a result of the additional support and wellbeing needs. A few young people benefit significantly from this approach and now spend almost all of their time fully included in the mainstream environment, attaining very well in their learning and wellbeing.

- Young people show awareness of each other's needs and respond with tolerance and understanding of disengagement or dysregulation. Staff use effective strategies to build resilience and promote solution-focused conversations. Most young people trust staff and feel comfortable sharing worries or emotions. Senior leaders should now review the use of Individual Education Plans to better target learning barriers, help young people to track their skills and progress and improve outcomes further.

- Staff understand their statutory duties and provide effective care and support. Young people meeting the criteria for Coordinated Support Plans (CSPs), including those who are care-experienced, are considered as part of whole-school planning. All plans are in place and regularly reviewed.

QI 3.2

Attainment and Achievement

- Most young people are making appropriate progress in literacy and numeracy from prior levels of learning, taking account of individual learner profiles.

- A few learners are making accelerated progress. A few young people should be working towards higher levels of attainment. Teachers need to continue to develop their planning and target setting further to ensure that individual targets provide all learners with the sufficient challenge to maximise attainment and achievement in all areas of their learning and wellbeing.

- In the BGE, most young people are meeting their planned literacy targets. Most learners are working well across milestones to first levels. A minority of learners are working through the second level. In Numeracy, most young people are successfully meeting their numeracy targets. Most learners are working well across the early and first levels. A minority of learners are working through the second level.

- In the senior phase, most young people successfully meet the demands of coursework at National 1 to National 4 levels across literacy and numeracy. They achieve units and full course awards. Teachers should now continue to identify progressive qualifications and wider awards to accredit all young people's achievements more fully.

- Across the Hub most young people engage in a range of rich wider achievements experiences including working with partners in sport and health. These experiences help to develop their leadership, sporting, and social communication skills.

- Young people are developing increased levels of confidence through working in groups. This includes interacting and collaborating with others out with the school where they feel able to contribute effectively. Senior leaders should continue to develop whole school systems to ensure that all young people understand better the skills they are developing. They should now work to ensure that young people receive recognition for their skills development work and continue to gain accreditation for their wider achievement experiences.

- Overall, attendance in the hub needs to improve. A majority of learners' attendance is lower than target figures of 90%. Senior Leaders should continue to monitor interventions to ensure attendance rises for targeted young people. The attendance of the S3 to S6 cohort should continue to be reviewed regularly.

- Senior leaders and staff have a detailed understanding of the additional support needs and the socio-economic context of all children and young people including care experienced learners. A key priority of the school is to ensure that no young person misses out as a result of their additional support needs or socio-economic barriers. The school works effectively with families and partners to provide a variety of meaningful activities, experiences and opportunities for young people to participate in a range of meaningful activities. Senior leaders should work with staff to evaluate the impact of these interventions and how effectively they close gaps and accelerate young people's progress.

Quality of provision of Gaelic Medium Education

Context

Gaelic (Learners) is part of the languages department and is led by a principal teacher. A member of the senior leadership team links to the languages department.

Acadamaidh Allt a' Mhuillinn offers Gaelic (Learners) as an option in the curriculum in S1 and in S2 with a choice as to whether to continue with the language into S3. At the end of S3, young people reduce the number of courses they study further. For those who continue to study Gaelic (Learners), pathways lead to National Qualifications in the senior phase up to the Advanced Higher. There are options to learn Gaelic as a beginner beyond S3.

Leadership of change

■ Across stages, young people are familiar with the values and some of the aims of their school. There is scope to ensure that school aims reflect clearly local and Gaelic identity. The school has signage in Gaelic and English as part of The Highland Council's policy. Young people across the school do not consistently understand the purpose of bilingual signage. This should be addressed in future work on the school's identity and the curriculum.

■ The improvement plan for languages links to whole-school priorities. This results in positive impact for the Gaelic (Learners) strategy. The staff team's use of national quality improvement frameworks, with more specialist resources such as the 'Advice on Gaelic Education,' would deepen self-evaluation for improvement. Senior leaders should link whole-school and departmental planning with the school's identity and aims of the council's Gaelic Language Plan. This needs to sustain securely Gaelic (Learners) in the curriculum. Additionally, this should result in increasing further the numbers leaving school with qualifications equipped to using Gaelic for life, further learning and work. Senior leaders should report the impact of this in the Standards and Quality Report. Senior leaders meet formally with principal teachers to evaluate young people's progress and attainment.

■ The staff team for Gaelic engage very effectively and passionately in taking forward improvement projects. Over time, this has resulted in increasing the numbers learning Gaelic at the school. There is a positive pattern of young people continuing with the language as they move through the school. The staff team are currently reviewing a decline in numbers in uptake in S1. Young people are routinely seeing how their views shape their learning of Gaelic. They find this motivating.

■ Specialist staff access a range of career-long professional learning. This includes working with national organisations such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Staff share resources and expertise very effectively beyond the school to support system-wide improvement.

Learning, teaching and assessment

■ The staff team and young people enjoy very positive relationships as a basis for their learning experiences. Young people are confident and have a strong sense of belonging to the community for Gaelic (Learners) at Acadamaidh Allt a' Mhuillinn. Senior leaders should continue to show how their adoption of local and national policy relates to Gaelic, for example, the UNCRC.

■ Young people learn in a range of motivating contexts. They learn about the associated culture of Gaelic. Young people make regular and embedded use of digital technology. Learning Gaelic is open and inclusive to all young people and staff at Acadamaidh Allt a' Mhuilinn-Millburn Academy. All young people can attend a lunch time club to make short films

in Gaelic for the national competition, 'Film G.' This promotes Gaelic very well for real purposes and enjoyment.

Curriculum: Learning pathways

- Learning pathways for Gaelic (Learners) result in National Qualifications SCQF Level 3 to level 6 in the senior phase. The staff team use experiences and outcomes to plan learning in S1 snd S2. In the past, teachers' input in the associated primary schools provide better progression and increased numbers learning the language at an early stage. This resulted in more young people continuing to learn Gaelic across the school. Senior leaders should plan strategically to sustain and increase numbers of speakers and revisit approaches that better met local and national outcomes for Gaelic (Learners). Young people do not get their entitlement to learning Gaelic in S3 covering the third level CfE levels. Young people study SCQF level three and four units, for which the entry requirement is at the discretion of the school, to get recognition for their learning of Gaelic.

- Young people take part in opportunities for achievement, such as participating in the Inverness Gaelic Mòd. They work with partners to increase young people's use of Gaelic in a widening range of situations. Senior leaders and the staff team should continue to develop Gaelic learning from the use of inclusive opportunities, such as lunch time clubs. This can enable more young people to experience Gaelic. The numbers of young people studying Gaelic in the senior phase remains positive.

Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

- Young people experience nurturing and inclusive relationships as they learn Gaelic. They feel safe and content in their learning. Young people who need additional support with their learning, benefit from accessible strategies. Young people's first languages, identities and interest in languages are used well to promote diversity. The staff team should now increase their use of the Gaelic language in day-to-day teaching to increase fluency and raise attainment. Young people can socialise and practise speaking Gaelic with a few staff across the school. This impacts positively on their sense of belonging within the school and Gaelic communities.

- The staff team are making positive progress in implementing the statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017. They ensure positive outcomes for young people. Senior leaders should use the statutory Guidance for strategic planning to secure and sustain 3-18 learning of Gaelic. Transition arrangements with primaries should be improved so that young people can make more informed choices in choosing languages. The statement on Gaelic (Learners) in the school handbook is not yet promoting Gaelic positively. This needs to be addressed now to support increased uptake.

Raising attainment and achievement

- Young people attain well in National Qualifications. They should be encouraged to be more spontaneous in taking part in everyday conversations and responding to questions in personal contexts.

Practice worth sharing more widely

■ Millburn Academy school staff have introduced an online platform to record and track young people's achievements and skills development, including meta skills. Young people celebrate and record these regularly. Across all year groups, a significant number of young people have recorded their skills. Teamwork, creativity, innovation and reading are amongst the highest recorded skills. The use of the online platform has the potential to help to strengthen available data on skills development and identify skills gaps that require a sharper focus.

■ The staff team for Gaelic (Learners) are determined and solution focused in motivating young people to maintain their learning of Gaelic. Young people can do so to Advanced Higher level. Young people have a strong sense of belonging to the community for Gaelic (Learners) at Acadamaidh Allt a' Mhuillinn – Millburn Academy. They experience nurturing and inclusive relationships, within which to learn Gàidhlig. Young people's views are listened to and shape their learning in a range of motivating contexts. Young people have real-life experiences in which to use Gàidhlig. This includes learning in the outdoors, for example consolidating directions in Inverness city centre. Young people make regular and embedded use of digital technology. Learning Gàidhlig is open and inclusive to all young people and staff at Acadamaidh Allt a' Mhuilinn – Millburn Academy. All young people are invited to attend a lunch time club to work with partners to make short films in Gàidhlig for the national competition, Film G. This promotes Gàidhlig very well for real purposes and enjoyment. Young people learn about the associated culture of Gaelic and take part successfully in a range of competitions. The staff team look outwards for career-long professional learning and to support system-wide improvement. This includes working with national organisations such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.