Church Hill Infant School (CHI)

DfE Number: 2110 **Status:** Academy Convertor

Planning Area: Charnwood Primary (Planning Area 855 0004), Charnwood Borough Council

Official admission number (PAN): 90

Current agreed admission number (AN): 60

School capacity if based on the official PAN: 270

School capacity as reported on GIAS: 270

School capacity as reported by the LA: 180

Aim of the consultation: Church Hill Infant School (CHI) is seeking to confirm its current temporary PAN of 60 pupils as a permanent change – Reducing its official PAN from 90 to 60.

Commentary

Leicestershire County Council's(LCC) school place strategy 2026–2031 indicates that the Charnwood planning area, in which Church Hill Infant School is one of four schools, has a reported capacity of 1,070 places. The LA's strategy document highlights that all schools in this area are popular and that 187 pupils accessed places across the border from Leicester City.

In 2024, Bradgate Education Partnership signed an agreement with Leicestershire County Council to temporarily reduce CHI's PAN from 90 to 60, subject to annual review and LA recall if place shortages arise.

Given the school has historically admitted below its 90-place capacity retaining this figure is inconsistent with local demand and risks opening under-subscribed classes that trigger severe financial penalties under statutory infant class size rules. The trust is therefore seeking to safeguard the curriculum provision and educational quality for existing and future pupils by consulting on a permanent PAN reduction to 60.

Justification for a PAN reduction

The Trust fully acknowledges the Local Authority's statutory sufficiency duties under the School Admissions Code 2021. However, the evidence in this document demonstrates that a PAN of 60 reflects a genuine change in admission numbers. Admissions have remained well below the schools official PAN of 90 for many years and the wider area has sufficient capacity to accommodate any residual demand without requiring unreasonable travel distances for families.

Confirming the PAN at 60 on a permanent basis would formalise the arrangement that already exists between the LA and the school and reflects how families are using the school. A secondary, but genuine, benefit of this alignment between PAN and demand is that it allows the trust to plan staffing and budgets more effectively. This is a consequence of matching provision to need, not the reason for the change itself.

The trust has considered the equalities impact of this proposal, including for pupils with SEND, disadvantaged families and other protected groups, and does not consider that a PAN of 60, will disproportionately affect access for any such group.

Local demand

The trust is mindful that there is considerable uncertainty in respect of future pupil numbers locally and nationally.

Nationally, the number of primary-aged pupils is falling. This, combined with the infant class size restrictions and year of entry rules, raises the likelihood that a school with a PAN (Pupil Admission Number) greater than local demand could experience significant financial hardship.

Although local area data suggests that the planning area in which CHI exists will have a deficit of places by 2030 (Table 10), this document does not present the full picture.

The data indicates that:

- The LA's projections are more severe than reality
- The LA's planning strategy has reported temporary PAN figures in its strategy documentation, under-representing the true number of places available in this planning area.
- At least 200 primary school places will exist in adjoining planning areas 855 0204 and 855 0306
- 213 places exist across the border in Leicester City within 1.5miles of CHI – Places likely to be in the same planning area in the future as a result of Local Government Reorganisation.

Charnwood Primary planning area

School	AN	Cap	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
Bishop Ellis Catholic Voluntary Academy	30	210	231	216	204	192	189
Church Hill C of E Junior School	65	260	242	245	251	273	293
Church Hill Infant School	60	180	178	191	202	214	225
Eastfield Primary School	60	420	313	342	364	387	385
Total	**215**	**1,070**	**964**	**994**	**1,021**	**1,066**	**1,092**
Spare capacity			**106**	**76**	**49**	**4**	**-22**

Table 10- Projected admissions over time (Source: LCC Place Planning Strategy 2026–2031)

Local trends

Table 11 shows that LA projections consistently overestimate actual roll numbers.

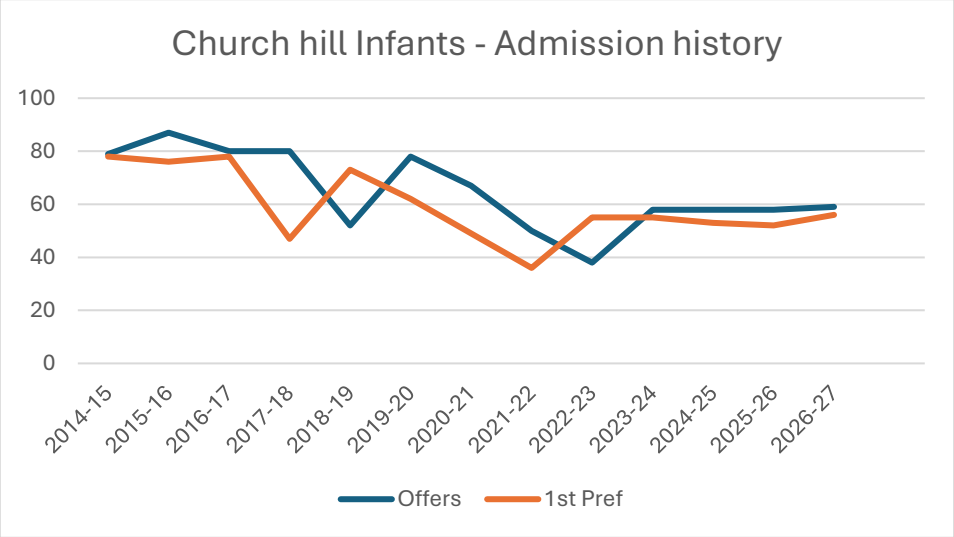
For 2025 and 2026, the LA forecast CHI rolls of 178 and 191, whereas actual pupil numbers were 167 and 166 (a variance of 11 to 25 pupils). Figure 2 shows that real intake for CHI has stabilised around 55 reception pupils per year, making a PAN of 60 optimal for single/double class structures without the severe budget implications, numbers over 60 can cause.

Church Hill Infant School

Year	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
Pupils on roll	178	191	202	214	225
Available spaces against estimate (Based on 180 capacity)	2	-11	-22	-34	-45
Actual number of pupils	167	166	[redacted]		
Number of pupils admitted in reception	57	56			
Available spaces against school trend (Based on 180 capacity)	13	14			

Table 11: Pupil numbers over time (school-level) (Source: School Internal Trend Data)

Figure 2:



LA Projections

As indicated, the LA has utilised **temporary PAN figures** in its planning strategy. This is clear as the LCC strategy document calculates planning area capacity as a direct multiple of operational AN (PAN x year groups = 1,070). This under-reports real physical capacity recorded in the DfE GIAS database by 321 places across the area (e.g., Bishop Ellis capacity is 341 not 210, CHI is 270 not 180, Church Hill Juniors capacity is 360 not 260).

Given that CHI is one of three schools where a temporary PAN has been used in calculations, the school can be confident this has been repeated elsewhere and there is greater capacity in the wider system.

The LA also indicates in its planning strategy that 187 places in the Charnwood planning area are filled by pupils from Leicester City.

The trust acknowledges the legal right for a parent to request a place at any school; however, given that LGR is likely to result in CHI being in the same or similar planning area and there is capacity in Leicester City schools (See later) this shows that there exists much greater capacity within the system than is reported in the Leicestershire document alone.

These issues combined with the other identified place capacity would suggest that formalising a PAN of 60 at CHI is appropriate.

Cross-border place availability

DfE data shows 213 available places across four Leicester City schools within 1.5 miles of CHI (e.g., Herrick Primary, Catherine Infant). While Leicestershire LA cannot rely on cross-border places for statutory fulfilment, this buffer reduces localised demand pressure.

School	Distance from CHI	Capacity	Number on roll
Sandfield Close Primary School	0.7 miles	252	250
Herrick Primary School	1 mile	440	305
Rushey Mead Primary School	1.2 miles	566	532
Catherine Infant School	1.5 miles	420	378
Total		1678	1465

Table 12: (Source: DfE GIAS Data) – School capacity within 1.5 miles of CHI

Adjoining areas

LA projections show that neighbouring planning area 855 0204 maintains over 100 surplus places through 2030. Furthermore, planned developments such as Broadnook Primary School (420 places) in adjoining area 855 0306 will absorb surrounding pupil growth, relieving pressure on Charnwood area schools.

Forecast Data	AN	Cap	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
St Peter and St Paul Church of England Academy	75	525	379	370	352	337	323
Queniborough Church of England Primary School	30	210	204	**226**	**244**	**259**	**273**
The Merton Primary School	60	420	420	418	**426**	**433**	**433**
The Pochin School	20	140	**138**	**138**	**139**	**141**	**142**
Total:	**185**	**1295**	**1141**	**1152**	**1161**	**1170**	**1171**

Table 13: 855 0204 *(Source: LCC Place Planning Strategy 2026–2031)*

Table 13 (from the LA's strategy document) shows that this area has an increasing capacity over time with 100+ spare places still available by 2030.

The trust acknowledges the housing gain expected in this area, however, this data should already have been factored into the calculations.

Forecast Data	AN	Cap	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
Hallam Fields Birstall	30	210	**220**	**298**	**374**	**446**	**491**
Highcliffe Primary School and Community Centre	60	420	406	410	411	420	**422**
Riverside Community Primary School Birstall	60	420	407	377	375	364	352
Total:	**150**	**1050**	**1033**	**1085**	**1160**	**1230**	**1265**

Table 14: 855 0306 *(Source: LCC Place Planning Strategy 2026–2031)*

Planning area 855 0306 is predicted to see an over-capacity of 205 places as a result of the new Broadnook Primary School which is not included in this data. It is reasonable

to assume that this new school will result in spare capacity in the current 3 Birstall schools, which are only 1.1–1.8 miles from CHI.

Impact and Equalities assessment

The trust has considered the equalities impact of this proposal, including for pupils with SEND, disadvantaged families and other protected groups, and does not consider that a PAN of 60 at CHI will disproportionately affect access for any such group.

This is because:

- Children with an EHCP can be admitted above the infant class-size restriction. This allows CHI to admit young people into reception, Year 1 and Year 2 without requiring additional classes over and above a PAN of 60.
- There are sufficient places, both in the planning area and adjoining areas to ensure that all pupils are able to access a school place, regardless of race, religious, socio-economic status or disability.
- Church Hill **Junior** school has a current PAN of 65. This means that the normal transition pathway for families between the two schools would not be affected.
- There is no change to the existing temporary PAN for CHI