Eastfield Primary School

DfE Number: 2157 **Status:** Academy Convertor

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

Admission Number (AN): 60

School capacity if based on the official PAN:420

School capacity as reported on GIAS: 420

School capacity as reported by the LA: 420

Aim of the consultation: Eastfield Primary School is seeking to reduce its PAN from 60 to 30 pupils.

Commentary

Leicestershire County Council's(LCC) school place strategy 2026–2031 indicates that the Charnwood planning area, in which Eastfield 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.

Eastfield has historically admitted below its 60-place PAN. Retaining a PAN of 60 therefore 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 seeking to safeguard the curriculum provision and educational quality for existing and future pupils by consulting on a permanent PAN reduction to 30.

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 30 reflects a genuine change in admission numbers. Admissions have remained below 60 for 12 of the last 13 years, below 50 for 8 of the last 13 years and below 30 for the past 2 years. Coupled with this, the wider area has sufficient capacity to accommodate any residual demand without requiring unreasonable travel distances for families.

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 30, 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.

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 will experience significant financial hardship.

Although local area data suggests that the planning area in which EAS exists will have a deficit of places by 2030 (Table 15), this document does not present the broader area picture and could mislead interested parties into believing that there would be insufficient places in the EAS community.

When the broader local picture is taken into account, there could be as many as 400 vacant school places within walking or reasonable travel distance of EAS.

- Table 17: Indicates (Source DfE) that 184 pupil places exist across the Leicester City/Leicestershire CC border within 2 miles of EAS
- At least 200 primary school places will exist in adjoining planning areas 855 0204 and 855 0306
- The LA's sufficiency planning can be shown to be more severe than reality - Table 16
- The LA has under-reported local school capacity in its strategy document – this means the potential school capacity in the local area could, be at least 200 places greater than reported.

Given all of the above, the trust maintains that a reduction in PAN for EAS is both necessary and not in conflict with the LA's duty to secure sufficient school places.

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

Local trends

Table 16 shows that LA projections consistently overestimate actual roll numbers.

For 2025 and 2026, the LA forecast EAS rolls of 313 and 342, whereas actual pupil numbers were 300 and 269 (a variance of 13 to 73 pupils).

Figure 3 shows that real intake for EAS has fallen year on year with reception in 2026 being 33 pupils. An intake of 33 brings a financial penalty as a result of the infant class size restriction of 30 – This brings severe financial challenges to EAS and impacts on provision for all other pupils across the school.

Eastfield Primary School

Year	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
LA estimated pupils on roll	313	342	364	387	385
Available spaces against estimate	107	78	56	33	35
Actual number of pupils	300	269			
Number of pupils admitted in reception	27	33			
Available spaces against school trend	120	151			

Table 16: Pupil numbers over time (school-level) (Source: School Internal Trend Data)

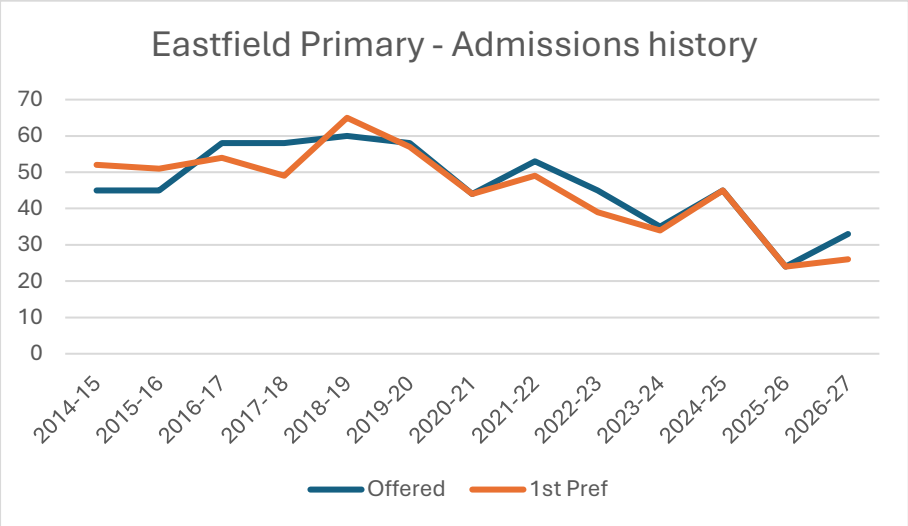


Figure 3:

LA Projections

EAS is in the same planning area as CHI, where it has already been indicated that the LA has utilised **temporary PAN figures** in its planning strategy. This is evident as the strategy document calculates planning area capacity as a direct multiple of operational AN (PAN x year groups = 1,070). This under-reports the 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).

The LA also indicates in its planning strategy document 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 EAS 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 30 at EAS is appropriate.

Cross-border place availability

DfE data shows 184 available places across four Leicester City schools within 1 - 2 miles of EAS.

While Leicestershire LA cannot rely on cross-border places for statutory fulfilment, this buffer reduces localised demand pressure.

The closest five schools across the border in Leicester City are:

School	Distance from EAS	Capacity	Number on roll
Sandfield Close Primary School	1 mile	252	250
Herrick Primary School	1.4 miles	440	305
Rushey Mead Primary School	2 miles	566	532
Wyvern Primary	1.8 miles	480	454
Hope Hamilton	1.6 miles	446	459
Total		2184	2000

Table 17: (Source: DfE GIAS Data) – Leicester school's proximity to EAS (Spare capacity)

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 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 18: 855 0204 *(Source: LCC Place Planning Strategy 2026–2031)*

Table 18 (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 19: 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 not included in the strategy document. It is reasonable to assume that this will result in spare capacity in the current 3 Birstall schools, the closest of which is only 2.2 miles from EAS.

School experience

The school's experience of the spare capacity is not, as the LA has indicated in its forecasts a gradual increase in pupil numbers. The school has seen declining numbers and as a result it has been necessary to implement:

- Mixed classes in Tr R / 1 and Yr3 / 4 classes
- An operational capacity in Yr6

Should the PAN not be reduced to 30 the school would need to implement operational capacities in Yrs1 – 6 in order to remain financially viable.

The effect of year groups between 30 and 60 over the last few years has been:

- High staffing costs
- A deficit budget
- A well-being toll on teachers who are required to operate both mixed age and single aged curriculum.

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 30 at EAS 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 EAS to admit young people into reception, Year 1 and Year 2 without requiring additional classes over and above a PAN of 30.
- 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 and Bishop Ellis a PAN of 30 which under-represent true capacity.
    - GIAS suggests the net capacity of these schools are 360 and 341 respectively which would equate to PANs of 90 and 48. This means that even should cross border or adjoining area spaces be unavailable the local planning area does have capacity.