Mountfields Lodge School

DfE Number: 2194 **Status:** Academy Convertor

Planning Area: Loughborough South (Planning Area 855 0209), Charnwood Borough Council — 10 primary schools, all academies

Admission Number (AN): Current temporary admission number 60;

Historical PAN: 75

School capacity if based on the official PAN: 525

Schools capacity as reported on GIAS: 525

School capacity as reported by the LA: 525

Aim of the consultation: Mountfield Lodge School is seeking to confirm the current temporary reduction in PAN as permanent. The school's temporary PAN is currently 60, having previously been 75.

Commentary

Leicestershire County Council's(LCC) school place strategy 2026 – 2031 indicates that the Loughborough South planning area, in which Mountfield Lodge School(MOU) is one of ten schools, has a capacity of 3465 places.

The LA's strategy document indicates that there are sufficient places in this development group and that in the future substantial housing is identified for this area in the local plan.

In December 2024, Bradgate Education Partnership agreed with the LA a reduction of MOU's PAN from 75 to 60. This was sought on a temporary basis, until such a time as demand required an increase.

The letter from the LA, noted that the school was expected to revert to an admission number of 75 on a graduated basis from the normal point of entry in the future.

Given the school has historically admitted below its 75 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 acknowledges that the LA has a sufficiency duty; however, it (the trust) also has a duty to secure the financial stability of the school. The current temporary arrangement as well as a PAN of 75, prevents the school having certainty about the future. This is because:

A PAN of 75 requires an average class size of 25 pupils which is:

- not possible in a 3 class per year format, due to insufficient classrooms to accommodate pupils (3 classes per year would require 21 classrooms; The school currently has 18 classrooms)
- financially unsustainable

A PAN of 75 forces the school, because of space and cost, to adopt alternative class arrangements. The most efficient arrangement is 2 classes of 30 and one class of 15. The classes of 30 are taught a year-based curriculum, whilst the mixed aged class is taught with pupils from multiple years ie 1/2 or 3/4. This forces teachers to adopt teaching practices which impact negatively on teacher well-being as:

- The curriculum is forced to run on a two-year cycle which creates significant planning, teaching and assessment workload issues for teachers
- A single year cycle would have positive impact on teacher workload and well-being
- The school requires 2 curriculums for each year – 1 age based and one mixed age based

Where older year groups could be combined to make larger classes, this is not possible due to space considerations. The school does not have class sizes to accommodate classes of 37/38. This restriction means the unaffordable 3 class model would persist through years R-6 were the school not to restrict year groups to 60.

In reception, where outdoor play and free-flow is an expected part of the curriculum, the school's building prevents the financially efficient use of resources. Where 75 pupils make up a year group not all pupils are able to easily access free-flow areas.

The school has already found it necessary to set operational capacity limits in Yrs 1 and 2. If the PAN reduction were not agreed, it would be necessary for the school to continue to set operational capacity limits in Years 1-6 to secure the financially necessary year group numbers. These capacity limits would be set to ensure that the average intake of around 55 pupils did not breach 60.

Whilst the school has balanced its budget, the upcoming years will be even more financially tight as groups of 75 pupils leave in Yr6. In order to balance the budget and plan for the future the school has found it necessary to make cuts to staffing and general provision.

The LA's graduated reversion to a PAN of 75, as identified in its letter to the school following the last PAN consultation. Would, because of the infant class size restriction, potentially place the school in severe financial difficulty. The school already experienced financial challenge in 24/25 when the school's reception classes had 62 pupils – Breaching the infant class size of 2 classes of 30, requiring significant financial outlay without affordable alternatives.

The school is therefore seeking in this formal consultation to match its intake with local demand and enable it to adjust, predict and plan its costs for the future in order to secure the financial sustainability of the school into the future.

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.

Local area data indicates that the 855 0209 planning area in which MOU exists will consistently have a yearly surplus of places by 2030 (Table 25) of between 314 and 590 across the period of the planning strategy.

The LA strategy document also indicates that adjoining planning areas also have large surpluses. When the broader local picture is taken into account, there could be as many as 700 vacant school places within walking or reasonable travel distance of MOU.

- Table 25: Indicates that between 314 and 590 places are available in Loughborough South
- Table 26: Indicates that Loughborough North (855 0009) has between 175 and 291 spare places available
- Table 27: Indicates that whilst Shepshed Belton Primary (855 0208) has a deficit of places, the LA figures have not taken account of Garenden park primary school which opens in 2027
- The LA's sufficiency planning can be shown to be more severe than reality - Table 28

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

Data review

Loughborough South planning area

School	AN	Cap	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
Beacon Academy	60	420	309	295	288	282	269
Booth Wood Primary School	30	210	207	200	193	186	179
Cobden Primary School & Community Centre	60	420	368	350	346	335	322
Holywell Primary School	60	420	419	422	434	445	442
Loughborough C of E Primary School	30	210	175	163	159	152	143
Mountfields Lodge School	75	525	480	470	453	434	415
Outwoods Edge Primary School	60	420	414	411	408	407	404
Rendell Primary School	60	420	379	368	347	329	314
Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy	30	210	199	201	201	203	206
Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School, Loughborough	30	210	201	196	194	186	181
Total	**495**	**3,465**	**3,151**	**3,076**	**3,023**	**2,959**	**2,875**
Spare capacity			**314**	**389**	**442**	**506**	**590**

Table 25: Source – LCC Place Strategy

Although significant housing is indicated in the local plan, this area has significant spare capacity. A permanent reduction from 75 to 60 would not pose a sufficiency issue in this planning area.

A reduction in PAN of 15 pupils at Mountfields, would reduce the overall surplus in this region by (7*15) = 105 pupils.

Adjoining areas

Two areas of note adjoin 8550209, these are Loughborough North 855 0009 and 855 0208.

Forecast Data	AN	Cap	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
Hathern Church of England Primary School	30	210	184	185	173	173	168
Robert Bakewell Primary School	60	420	317	307	311	293	294
Stonebow Primary School Loughborough	30	210	207	193	186	180	179
Thorpe Acre Infant School	50	150	123	101	88	93	101
Thorpe Acre Junior School	50	200	184	186	192	170	157
Total:	**220**	**1190**	**1015**	**972**	**950**	**909**	**899**

Table 26: *8550009 Planning area – Source LCC planning strategy*

This planning area has as an admission capacity of 1190. In this area the number of spare capacity places rises from 175 in 2025/2026 to 291 in 2029/2030

Forecast Data	AN	Cap	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
Belton Church of England Primary School	15	105	73	66	61	58	56
Newcroft Primary Academy	60	420	406	**434**	**444**	**458**	**475**
Oxley Primary School Shepshed	39	273	261	**280**	**309**	**319**	**333**
Saint Winefride's Catholic Voluntary Academy Shepshed Leicestershire	30	210	160	163	151	146	152
St Botolph's Church of England Primary School	**60**	420	412	**508**	**579**	**686**	**732**
Total:	**204**	**1428**	**1312**	**1451**	**1544**	**1667**	**1748**

Table 27: *8550208 Planning area – Source LCC planning strategy*

This planning area has an admission capacity of 1428. In this area the number of spare capacity places is increasingly in deficit from -23 in 2026/2027 to -320 in 2029/2030. The LA's sufficiency plan indicates that overall, there is a forecast deficit of 110 primary places (It is difficult to see how this figure has been arrived at given the figures presented).

Whether this figure is -320 or -110 the LA's planning document indicates that a site for a 2 - 3 form entry primary school has been set aside. It is assumed that this is the new Garenden Park Primary school expected to open in September 2027 which would generate (7*60 =) 420 places; This would more than address the identified deficit – Not included in LCC's planning strategy.

Pupil numbers over time (school-level)

Year	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
Pupils on roll	480	470	453	434	415
Available spaces against estimate	45	55	72	91	110
Actual number of pupils	464	440	School predicted number based on past experience 410		
Number of pupils admitted in reception	52	52			
Available spaces against school trend	16	30			

Table 28: *Actual pupil numbers*

Whilst LA predictions are necessary to support place planning, they rarely predict parental preference or house purchasing behaviour wholly accurately.

In 2025 & 2026, MOU was predicted to have a total school population of 480 and 470 respectively. In reality the school had a population of 464 and 440, between 16 and 30 pupils less than the short-term forecast predicted.

Using past admission experience and knowledge of the current school population the school predicts it will have between 400 – 410 pupils in 2027/28 not the 453 the LA forecast in its planning strategy document.

MOU has consistently admitted fewer than 75 with the last four years reception admissions being well below the 75 PAN at : **26/27** 52; **25/26** 52; **24/25** 62; **23/24** 55

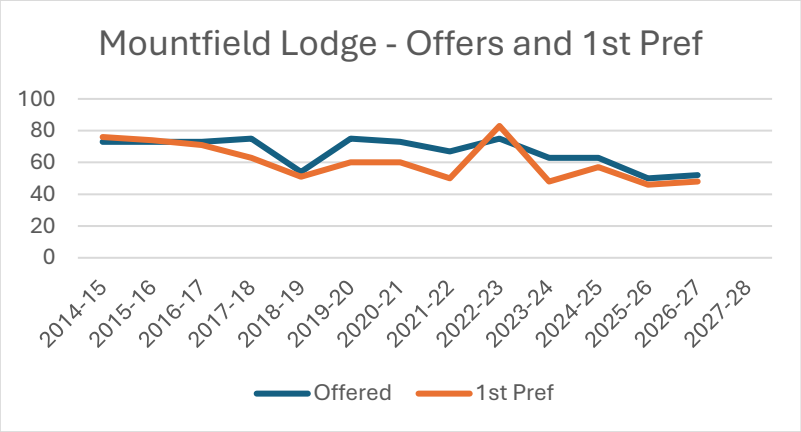


Fig 5: Mountfields Lodge – Offers and 1st Pref

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, will disproportionately affect access for any such group.

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.

As there is no change to the existing temporary PAN, there are no other equalities issues to assess.