

Riverside Meadows Academy

Barton Road, Wisbech, PE13 4TG

Unique reference number (URN): 142932

Monitoring inspection report:

10 February 2026

At the most recent graded inspection, the following areas were identified as needing to improve:

The school has not ensured that the curriculum sets out how pupils' existing knowledge helps them secure new learning. This means that teaching does not explicitly link new knowledge to what pupils already know. Consequently, pupils find it difficult to secure new knowledge and do not learn as well as they should. The school and trust must ensure that the curriculum clearly sets out how prior learning links to new knowledge.

The school has not ensured that staff have the subject and pedagogical knowledge they need to teach the curriculum as intended. As a result, teaching does not provide pupils with clear explanations of new information, adaptations that help them engage or suitable activities they need to secure learning. The school and trust must ensure that staff have the subject and pedagogical knowledge to teach the curriculum as designed.

Some of the strategies to support pupils who struggle to attend school regularly often lack the focus to directly address individual pupils' needs and barriers. This means that some pupils do not feel adequately supported to return to school. The school and trust must ensure that the support provided to pupils addresses their individual barriers to attending school regularly and often.

The school has not ensured that staff have a shared understanding of its vision and how it will be realised. This means that staff do not understand why changes are implemented. It has also led to marked differences in the provision between the 2 sites. A lack of performance indicators means staff and trustees are unable to measure how well actions are impacting on pupils' experience. The school and trust must ensure that staff and trustees understand and share its vision and how this will be realised in their practice.

Leaders and trustees are taking effective action to improve the school but continued work is needed to remove the requires significant improvement designation.

During the monitoring inspection, inspectors focused on the following evaluation areas:

- Leadership and governance
- Curriculum and teaching
- Attendance and behaviour

Leadership and governance

Leaders and trustees have ensured that they are focusing on the right priorities to improve the school and are tackling these priorities in the right order. Several leaders, including at trust level, are new to the school and to their roles. They have brought much-needed stability to the school in what has been a turbulent and challenging time. Staff are now clear on the vision for the school and on leaders' high expectations.

Leaders and trustees know the work still to be done and have the necessary knowledge and experience to achieve this. In a short period of time, they have put into place effective systems and processes to reshape curriculum pathways, track attendance, address more challenging behaviours and improve governance. Leaders and trustees now have a far better oversight of the school due to improvements in the information used to check how well the school is performing. Improved leadership at the St Neots site has reduced the inequity between the 2 sites.

The school recognises the need to implement its plans for the curriculum and for sustaining improved attendance and behaviour with increased pace. It needs to start to show sustainable impact of this work on pupils' engagement and outcomes. Leaders will need to guide staff on how to teach the new curriculum with the ambition intended. Leaders must sharpen their checks on how well the use of alternative provision is working.

Safeguarding

At the previous graded inspection/monitoring inspection, safeguarding was evaluated as being effective.

Attendance and behaviour

Leaders have put effective systems in place to track and monitor pupils' attendance at an individual level. Staff have had training on how to identify and resolve barriers to pupils' attendance. The school's actions have improved the attendance of some pupils with previously persistently high absence. There are fewer pupils on part-time timetables; however, reducing this further remains a key focus. The school recognises the need to ensure pupils at alternative provision attend more regularly. There have been some improvements in this; however, these have not been consistent. Overall attendance is improving but it remains low. It continues to be a key priority for leaders.

There have been fewer suspensions since the last inspection. On both sites, pupils are accessing their lessons. Both sites are calm overall. However, leaders acknowledge that

more is still to be done to ensure pupils fully engage in their learning. This is partly due to the need to implement the required improvements to the curriculum so that lessons are better matched to pupils' needs and harness their interests. Pupils have a mixed view of behaviour. Some recognise the improvements leaders have made, including a more consistently applied behaviour policy. However, for some pupils', unwelcome behaviours still recur.

Curriculum and teaching

Since the last inspection, leaders have designed and reshaped clear curriculum pathways at both key stage 3 and key stage 4. These pathways are ambitious. They have taken due consideration of pupils' starting points and desired academic or vocational endpoints. Consequently, pupils will be better qualified for their post-16 choices. The school has checked it has an accurate picture of pupils' starting points, including in reading. A realignment of class groupings is underway. This is to ensure pupils are following a pathway that is best matched to filling gaps in knowledge and to their aptitudes, therapeutic needs and interests. However, there is still work to do to map out precisely the key knowledge pupils need to know and in what order within these curriculum pathways, especially at key stage 3. Work on this has started but is still in its infancy.

Staff are implementing the current curriculum more consistently across both sites as intended. Staff are working more collaboratively now as 'one school' to share ideas and resources despite being on 2 sites. As pupils here need predictable routines, staff have started to follow the new whole-school agreed lesson structure. This gives pupils regular reminders of prior learning and encourages them to work more independently. However, leaders understand that staff will need additional training and support to deliver the new curriculum pathways effectively and to adapt them to the specific needs of their classes. This necessary work is planned to start shortly.

Additional next steps

Leaders and those responsible for governance must, in addition to the next steps raised at the school's last full inspection:

- tighten their oversight of alternative provision to ensure that it is necessary, suitable and effective in meeting pupils' individual needs and engaging them in learning ready for their next steps

About this inspection

The inspectors carried out this monitoring inspection under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005, and it was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require significant improvement following the graded inspection that took place in June 2025.

The school's previous inspection was carried out under the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) at that time. The renewed EIF took effect from 10 November 2025. The areas for improvement identified at the school's graded inspection and subsequent

monitoring inspection have been cross-referenced to the relevant evaluation areas in the inspection toolkit for consideration on this monitoring inspection.

The purpose of this monitoring inspection was not to determine grades for any of the evaluation areas set out in the school inspection toolkit. The purpose was to identify and report on the school's progress in addressing priorities for improvement since the school's previous inspection.

Since the last inspection, there have been several changes to leadership and staffing at a school and trust level.

A new substantive co-headteacher was appointed at the St Neots site in January 2026, following a period of several interim co-headteachers. A new assistant headteacher responsible for curriculum and teaching at both sites also started in January 2026. The co-headteacher at Wisbech Green was not present for this monitoring visit.

At trust level, the executive team members at Horizons Education Trust are also new to role. Since the last inspection, a substantive chief executive officer (CEO) was appointed, and started in September 2025.

The trust director of education is currently based at the Wisbech Green site. The director of safeguarding is also present at both sites.

The school is split over 2 sites, which are geographically about 40 miles apart. The address for the second site is Almond Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 1DZ. There are currently 42 pupils at St Neots and 79 pupils at Wisbech Green.

The school uses several alternative providers.

During this inspection, meetings were held with the co-headteacher at the St Neots site, the trust director of education, the trust director of safeguarding, other school senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust and the chair of the trustees to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection.

Lead inspector

Sara Boyce

His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector

Charlie Fordham

His Majesty's Inspector

About this school

School capacity	120
Number of pupils on roll	121
Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable)	Not applicable
Type of specialist provision (if applicable)	The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs

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