

North Kesteven Academy

Address: Moor Lane, North Hykeham, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN6 9AG

Unique reference number (URN): 136871

Inspection report: 6 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	    
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards not met

Leaders have not ensured that there is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that adequately protects children from harm.

The school's procedures for protecting pupils, including those at greater risk of harm or who are frequently absent are not sufficiently rigorous. Staff do not implement these procedures consistently or effectively enough to keep pupils safe. Records of actions taken do not always follow statutory guidance. It is unclear as to what actions have been taken to keep pupils safe. The school has not taken sufficient actions to keep some pupils safe from child-on-child violence or harassment. Leaders have taken swift action and are working with external organisations to address the failings. However, substantial improvement is still required to ensure pupils are fully safe. Current weaknesses place pupils at risk of harm.

Leaders carry out and record the required checks to ensure that adults in the school are suitable to work with pupils. Staff receive appropriate training and know how to spot and report concerns. Pupils learn about staying safe and recognising risk, including when online.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

This school requires special measures

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **special measures** because it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Expected standard

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Many pupils who attend the school are disadvantaged, are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or are pupils facing additional vulnerabilities. Leaders identify the needs of most pupils quickly. Pupils, particularly those with complex home circumstances and/or overlapping needs and vulnerabilities, are well supported through the relationships that staff build with them and their families. Leaders are aware that some of the information that teachers receive in order to adapt learning, particularly pupils with SEND, is

not yet as precise as needed. They are taking appropriate action to improve this aspect of their work.

Leaders work closely with relevant professionals and services, including the virtual school headteacher, to ensure that pupils who need it receive appropriate academic and pastoral support. This collaborative approach has had positive impact. A greater proportion of the most vulnerable pupils are engaging more positively in the life of the school.

The strategy to support disadvantaged pupils has improved. Leaders have used their extensive knowledge of the school's context and wider research to make sure that additional funding is spent wisely and has had a positive impact. Typically, the support enables barriers to be overcome. This is reflected in the improvements seen in disadvantaged pupils' behaviour and achievement by the time they leave school.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' attainment, including that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), has not been high enough at the end of key stages 4 and 5 over time. Although attainment in national examinations remains below national averages across most measures, disadvantaged pupils' attainment has improved. Even so, disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Pupils are not as well prepared as they should be for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, continue to have gaps in the essential foundations in reading, writing and mathematics needed for future learning. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should across the subjects they study. Some pupils with SEND do not make the progress across the curriculum that they are capable of.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Leaders have recently begun to take the strategic action needed to improve pupils' attendance. The school's context is complex. Many pupils are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at unusual points in the year is also higher than the national average. Leaders are working with external agencies, including the local authority, to understand this context more fully and to take the action needed to ensure that more pupils attend regularly. It is too early to see the full impact of this work. Pupils' attendance remains below national averages. Although attendance is improving, too many disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND continue to be persistently absent.

Pupils' behaviour has improved. The number of suspensions, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, has reduced. Lessons are calm, and pupils follow school routines. New mobile phone procedures have made a significant difference, particularly pupils' mental health and wellbeing during the school day.

Most pupils do not have concerns about bullying or harassment. There are staff they can approach if they need help. However, some pupils are less confident that their concerns will be taken seriously. In some cases, this is because no one has followed up with them to explain what action was taken. Leaders recognise that communication in this area needs to improve.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have planned a broad and ambitious curriculum in most subjects. However, the effectiveness of teaching varies. Teachers do not routinely adapt learning well enough for disadvantaged pupils or for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Too often, pupils do not receive meaningful opportunities to apply their learning. Teachers sometimes move learning on before checking that pupils have understood what has already been taught. Where teachers maintain high expectations, pupils rise to them, achieve well and enjoy their learning. This is not yet the case for all pupils. Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They are taking appropriate actions to improve the effectiveness of teaching but it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Teaching does not ensure that some pupils, including some pupils with SEND, secure the essential knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics that they need. Learning is not always matched to pupils' starting points and can be either too easy or too difficult. Teachers' checks on pupils' understanding are inconsistent. Errors in grammar, spelling, handwriting and punctuation frequently go unaddressed and persist over time. Leaders have introduced a reading programme that helps many pupils develop the knowledge needed to read fluently. However, not all pupils who need this support can access it.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention 

Leaders have ensured that the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is well planned. Special themed days throughout the year enhance this learning. However, as in other subjects, the PSHE curriculum is not taught consistently well. While some pupils feel they gain the knowledge they need to keep themselves safe, others, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not. Some pupils feel that the learning is not well matched to their needs or that important topics, such as online safety, are not covered in sufficient depth. These pupils do not feel well prepared for life beyond school.

Pupils are knowledgeable about issues of equality and speak confidently about the importance of diversity, fairness and kindness. They recognise the diversity of modern society and value the knowledge they gain about different cultures and religions. The quality of this learning is stronger in key stage 3 than in key stage 4.

The school offers a range of additional activities at lunch time and after school to broaden pupils' experiences and interests. Pupils, including the most disadvantaged, enjoy the privilege of the school's extensive grounds and the opportunities offered through the links to the local leisure centre.

Pupils receive effective careers advice and guidance. This is an area of the school's provision to celebrate.

Many pupils appreciate the care they receive from staff, including those serving food during breakfast club. Pupils with SEND really value the support they receive within the Bridge provision. Typically, these pupils are known and cared for well. Consequently they feel safe.

Post 16 provision

Needs attention 

Leaders are appropriately ambitious for students in the sixth form. Students follow suitable programmes of study. The curriculum is appropriately planned but it is not taught consistently well. Checks on students' learning are not as precise as needed. This means that gaps in students' knowledge can go unresolved. Errors and misconceptions continue. Learning is not routinely adapted to meet students' needs, particularly, but not exclusively for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The achievement of students studying A-level courses is significantly below that of A-level students nationally. They are not prepared well for their next steps. Students electing to study vocational courses typically achieve more strongly.

Some students make a positive contribution to the school and are fantastic role models for other pupils. This is particularly the case for the students that manage the well-resourced library and support the reading of younger pupils. However, some students do not engage in other wider activities that have been offered to them, some of which encourage their personal development and extend their wider opportunities. This limits their learning and their experience of sixth-form study. Even so, these students feel that staff know them well and have their best interests at the heart. They feel safe in school and do not fear harassment or discrimination, they feel there are many to turn to if they need support or advice.

Urgent improvement

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement 

This school has experienced a period of decline. Until very recently, leaders, including those responsible for governance, have paid too little attention to ensuring that pupils are safe. There has not been sufficient action taken to make sure that all pupils attend and achieve well. While the work of new leaders is starting to have a positive impact, many of the improvements are still in the early stage and are not yet sustained. There is much more work for the school to do to ensure that pupils' welfare and wellbeing are promoted sufficiently well and that they can achieve their potential in full.

Trustees have not fulfilled their statutory responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Despite their commitment to their roles, trustees' oversight of the school's priorities for improvement is weak. This means they have not offered leaders the support and challenge needed to help the school improve.

Staff are extremely positive about new leaders. They buy into new leaders' vision for pupils. Staff feel that their welfare is considered. They value the professional development

opportunities now offered, and the regular briefings that help to keep them up to date, including those relating to pupils' safeguarding and welfare.

Parents are also positive about the recent developments within the school. They describe new leaders as 'a breath of fresh air'. Some parents, particularly those parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have concerns about communication between home and school. They would like to see this improve further.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

The school has not taken all necessary steps to ensure that safeguarding is effective. Work has begun, at pace, to address this but more work is needed to ensure that pupils, including pupils that are regularly absent from school, are safe.

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should by the time they leave the school. This has been the case for some time. Consequently, pupils are not as well prepared for their next steps as they should be. Too many pupils do not gain essential knowledge in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching that pupils receive varies too much between subjects and lessons. Teachers do not routinely adapt learning well enough to meet pupils' needs, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This contributes to pupils not achieving as well as they should.

Pupils know which staff to approach if they need help. Many pupils demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Typically, pupils do not view bullying as a major issue and feel confident to report concerns. However, some pupils do not trust that staff will follow up their concerns as effectively as required.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, recognise the recent improvements across the school. They report that behaviour in lessons and around the site has improved significantly. Pupils behave well, show politeness and engage positively with adults. Pupils describe the school as 'stricter but fairer.' Learning is rarely disrupted. Social times are calm and well supervised. Typically, pupils with SEND, along with other vulnerable pupils, value the skilled support from staff that helps them manage their behaviour and be ready to learn. Attendance is beginning to improve. Pupils appreciate the breakfast club and the warm welcome they receive from staff each morning. Despite this, too many pupils, including those with SEND, are regularly absent.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. They value the school's extensive grounds and playing fields. Reading leads take great pride in their role and act as positive role models for younger pupils.

Next steps

- Leaders must ensure that they fulfil the statutory requirements for safeguarding set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education regarding reporting concerns, making referrals, keeping records of concerns and actions taken. They must ensure that the checks on

pupils not in school but on the school roll are robust and effective and that attendance registers are completed accurately.

- Leaders and trustees must ensure that statutory core functions are appropriately conducted, particularly those relating to safeguarding. They must ensure effective oversight of the school's priorities for improvement and offer the expert support and challenge necessary to improve the school at pace.
 - Leaders should take effective action to raise achievement at the end of key stage 4 and key stage 5, particularly for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. They should ensure that pupils achieve a secure understanding of foundational knowledge in English and mathematics.
 - Leaders should make sure that there is a well-planned curriculum across all subjects, that suitably builds on pupils' starting points and that ensures that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and students in the sixth form develop the foundations of learning needed to successfully progress to their appropriate next steps.
 - Leaders should ensure that they embed highly effective teaching and assessment across the school so that all groups of pupils and students in the sixth form, make clear and sustained progress across the curriculum. They should continue the work to improve the information teachers receive in order to suitably adapt pupils' learning, particularly for pupils with SEND.
 - Leaders should continue their work to analyse closely the absence of different groups of vulnerable pupils, to identify priorities accurately, and to continue to improve their attendance particularly for pupils that are persistently or severely absent and pupils with SEND.
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About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

HMCI strongly recommends that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspections we carry out.

This school is part of North Kesteven Academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO) Jonathan Sloan, who is also the chair of the board of trustees.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with the CEO of the trust who is also the chair of trustees.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The headteacher took up the post in September 2025. The leadership team has, very recently, been re-structured.

The school makes use of two, registered, alternative provisions.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Headteacher: Holly Thomas

Lead inspector:

Jayne Ashman, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Stuart Anderson, Ofsted Inspector

Matthew Fearn-Davies, His Majesty's Inspector

Gary Carlile, Ofsted Inspector

Simon Hollingsworth, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

611

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,461

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

32.74%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.45%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

20.46%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	23.5%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	23.1%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	16.9%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	37.9	46.1	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	33.7	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	34.5	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.94	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.84	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	14.7%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	2.5%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	6.3%	25.2%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	30.7	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	24.7	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	27.0	35.0	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-1.34	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.07	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	14.7%	53.1%	-38.4 pp
2023/24 (final)	2.5%	53.1%	-50.6 pp
2022/23 (final)	6.3%	52.4%	-46.2 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	30.7	50.4	-19.7
2023/24 (final)	24.7	50.0	-25.3
2022/23 (final)	27.0	50.3	-23.3

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-1.34	0.16	-1.50
2022/23 (final)	-1.07	0.17	-1.23

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	89%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	95%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	95%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	25.00	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	25.99	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	24.17	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	-0.5	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	0.0	0.0	Close to average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	12.9%	8.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	14.3%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	14.1%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	40.2%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	39.8%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	44.5%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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