

AUTUMN/WINTER  
2023

# NEWSLETTER

Achievment Beyond Expectations



[www.horizons.org.uk](http://www.horizons.org.uk)



# A WORD FROM THE CEO



I would like to thank our staff across the Trust for such hard work and continued commitment to our children and young people. Our staff continue to be the most important part of the delivery of an effective and quality service, as we value the amazing talents of our staff.

During this year, staff faced national industrial action that was settled regarding teacher pay and support staff pay awards. There is understanding about the cost of living for everyone and for parents.

Our Central Team for Horizons Education Trust continues to expand and develop in experience in response to the growth of the Trust. please find time to look on our website as these people are having a significant impact and supporting our schools.

We introduce a new Head Teacher for Spring Common Academy, Rebecca Greig and Deputy Head Teacher, Leigh Aitken, appointed for January 2024.

Rebecca will communicate with parents and guardians to keep in touch with you. Alex Tomkins is leaving us and professionally he has worked hard to hand over detailed strategic plans and school operations and developments to provide continuity for Rebecca. As CEO I will ensure this transition is smooth on behalf of the Trust and as provide continuity and reassurance.



Progress with our project to open Prestley Wood Academy at Alconbury Weald is on track for September and involved our Head Teacher designate, Caroline Place.

We have concluded our S10 consultation and this report is on our Horizons Education Trust website. Recently we concluded all our design finishes and I can assure that the new building will be amazing and mirror the established provision at Spring Common Academy. If you recall, Cambridgeshire County Council did provide a Capital build project to enable Spring Common Academy to improve facilities too.

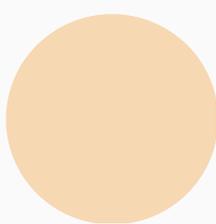
Progress with Riverside Meadows Academy has included the opening of a beautiful building at Barton Road, Wisbech Green to extend provision for SEMH pupils. This site has additions to the staffing team and includes two new Assistant Head Teachers. We are now actively working with both Co – Head Teachers to improve the building and facilities at Almond Road, St Neots.

We close the Autumn term in a strong position as a Trust. This is only possible, with external pressures around us, as we navigate our path with the determination of the Trust team, with new Chair of Trustees, Mark Williams and our valued staff in our schools.

Consultations: Thank you for taking the time to respond to our consultations. Our recent consultation asked a question about term dates, we accepted the decision, and have issued standardised term dates available on our websites.

**Kim Taylor, OBE**  
**CEO, Horizons Education Trust**

**“I would like to thank our staff across the Trust for such hard work and continued commitment to our children and young people.”**



# A WORD FROM THE CHAIR



I have pleasure in writing this brief note to you following my appointment as Chair of the Trust in October. I joined the Trust as a Trustee in early 2021 and the Trust has changed significantly since then, more later.

I live locally and was attracted to Horizons Education Trust given its great work in nurturing and providing for special young people in our area. My background is in business where I have worked for a long time, the only things I knew about education was having two sons and experiencing their journey through schools, so I have been on a steep learning curve! They have now completed their education and are in the next part of their lives.

I took over as Chair from Sue Bailey, who has been Chair for a number of years, and all the Trustees give her their thanks for her support, leadership and hard work during that time

In early 2021, the Trust had one site and academy, Spring Common Academy and was just about to take on the two-site Riverside Meadows Academy, which has significantly increased and enriched our pupil group. Riverside Meadows Academy, which include Wisbech Green, is now fully a part of the Trust and seeing growth in its pupils. Wisbech Green has seen enormous change during this year, moving into superb, brand-new premises in the town. A much-needed improvement over their previous building and grounds. I am sure all the staff and pupils will have a much happier time there. Thanks go to the staff at Wisbech for their huge efforts in moving into the new site and making it a success! I am sure that both the St Neots and Wisbech sites will move on from here with confidence.



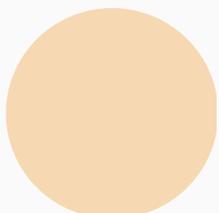
Next year we look forward to establishing a new academy at Prestley Wood in Alconbury. Many years in the development, years of hard work from our untiring and committed CEO, Kim Taylor, and her staff are finally going to pay off. Construction of the new facilities is well underway and on schedule for completion in time for the academy to open in time for the next academic year.

In all of our academies, I know that we have a dedicated team committed to providing the very best for our pupils and I thank them all, teaching and no teaching staff, the leadership teams and our Headteachers.

Finally, my thanks go to all connected with the trust, staff, parents, pupils and my fellow trustees AND wishing you all a very happy Christmas and New Year. Looking forward to next term!

**Mark Williams**  
Chair, Horizons Education Trust

**“In all of our academies,  
I know that we have a  
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# RIVERSIDE MEADOWS ACADEMY; ST NEOTS



**Riverside Meadows  
Academy**

We are now a third of the way through the new school year and excitedly looking forward to the Christmas break so we can all spend some time with our families, recharge the batteries and see if Santa thinks if we have been good.

September kicked off with our staff INSETs (In Service Training Days) where staff were trained in all areas of Safeguarding our students, and been able to identify issues quickly to help protect them both in and out of school. Upon the students' return, our local St Neots students participated with Velobuild, a project where they build and maintain their own mountain bikes, then learn all about riding them safely to and from school with all the recommended safety equipment. So not only are we promoting health and fitness, but we are also making sure that our young people are safe when travelling to and from school. We will be repeating this in the new year with other students, but this time keeping the bikes at school to be used with our Summer Outdoor Education program.

The start of September also saw a big push on literacy and reading across the whole school, finishing off with International Literacy Day and students and staff writing lots of poems.

On the 13th September we welcomed our Year 7 parents for a settling-in afternoon, closely followed a week later with the first of our KS4 moving-on events and the first of our Riverside Open Parent Forums. Fundraising for charities was also important this month with over £200 raised for Macmillan and Genes for Jeans.

October was equally as busy with a focus on Numeracy, Black History, and Mental Health. Staff were trained to recognise the indicators for county lines drug running, sexual grooming and we had further training in therapeutic thinking, including one of our most important functions at school, Restorative Circles; where we solve problems and issues, without resorting to a punishment and sanction culture. The end of October saw a drive to support a local Food Bank with a school organised collection.

November started with a bang, yes it was Bonfire Night, but most importantly we had a very respectful assembly on Remembrance and what it represents and means to people across the world, and why people get so angry about the idea of it. Our first successful trip to London for our budding artists went out this month, visiting the Frameless Art Gallery and using trains and tube to get there. The 17th November celebrated individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance through how people use toilets throughout the world and answered the age old question of seat up or seat down.

As we moved through December we continued the theme of Individual Liberty, Mutual Respect and Tolerance, as we investigated Rosa Parks riding the bus, Human Rights Day and towards the end of the month, International Tea Day; where we looked at the role tea had in causing America and India to break away from British Rule and seek independence. Add in there the annual Riverside Meadows Festive Performance and Enterprise Day, no wonder we are all ready for a rest!



**ANDREW ARMSTRONG  
CO-HEAD TEACHER**



# RIVERSIDE MEADOWS ACADEMY; WISBECH GREEN



**Riverside Meadows  
Academy**

What an amazing term at Riverside Meadows, Wisbech!

Staff and pupils have achieved so much, in what seems a blink of an eye. In just 14 weeks, we have welcomed numerous new students and staff into the new building, made new friends, and explored our new surroundings with familiar faces from our previous building at Algores Way.

We have more than doubled in size, and been able to add so many new things to our curriculum. The pupils have settled so well into the new setting, and have achieved so much. We still get to do all the 'normal' curriculums, such as English, Maths, Science (in our brand new lab), and PSHE, but we have been able to extend our PE provision, and add vocational and additional curricular offers such as Construction, Hair & Beauty, Music, Social Skills and Outdoor Education. The facilities are just brilliant, and we have so much space to work with.

The response from parents has also been incredible. Here are just a few of the comments:

*"He's never been so happy in school. He comes home and all he talks about is what he's done that day, and he gets up in the morning excited for school."*

*"I'm so glad [pupil] is settling in well. I've never seen her so happy when she has come home from school before!"*

*"...it's so comforting to know how supported he is with yourself and your class, he hasn't been used to that in a school for years!"*

*"Thank you so much for all the care and support you give to him, it makes the world of difference for him and us."*

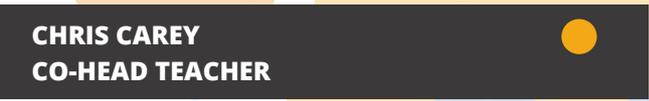
*"I can't believe the difference in [pupil] already. He hasn't been with you long, but the difference in him is incredible."*

We have ridden horses, baked numerous cakes and biscuits, dressed up for Children in Need, made our own drums, designed and built bird boxes, curled (and straightened) hair, visited 6th form colleges, and so much more besides. We couldn't have done it without the support of Horizons Education Trust, our parent/carers, staff, and most of all, the pupils, so thank-you to all of you.

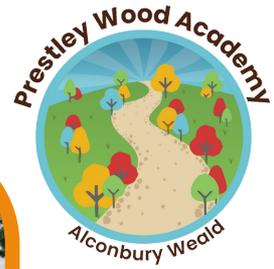
As we move into 2024, we can reflect on an amazing start to our journey, and although we know we still have a long way to go, we can be pleased with how this academic year has begun. We are so proud of what our students and staff have achieved in such a short space of time, and we can't wait for the exciting adventures ahead.

We hope you have a restful and enjoyable Christmas, and we look forward to starting 2024 with you all, as we move on to even bigger and better things.

**CHRIS CAREY  
CO-HEAD TEACHER**



# PRESTLEY WOOD ACADEMY



## Community

We are extremely grateful for the local community welcoming us with open arms. Already we have had offers of future project opportunities for CEIAG experiences from businesses on the Enterprise campus, set up links with the local primary and nursery school and local shop, been offered a stall space in the market square, and our own allocated community allotment space. Indeed this week I was privileged to accompany a group of students from Spring Common Academy to take part in a tree planting activity and first aid demonstration at MAGPAS who have built their state-of-the-art building at Alconbury Weald, and have committed to working with Prestley Wood Academy pupils in the future.

Our school profile continues to be raised in Alconbury Weald through the submission of articles in the community newsletter, voicing an interview on the local podcast, and attendance at the local community forum. Our first Advisory Academy Group made up of 8 local residents and business people is now established. All members are passionate about supporting the school and have been extremely generous in giving up their valuable time and sharing their vast experience to support its opening.



## Cohort

We have begun to receive consultation papers detailing the needs of potential new pupils. Visiting families and feeder schools and carefully analysing and responding to these papers will be the biggest task ahead of us over the next two terms to build up our first intake of 70 pupils (meeting our prospective pupils will also be the biggest pleasure!)

It is crucial that our specialist offer is taken up by those young people who will most benefit and that each new pupil we add will be able to learn and progress alongside their peers. Our admissions criteria has been designed to clearly define the needs of the young people we are best suited to serve and has been widely shared in the hope that it will guide local families in their decision-making and enable collaboration with the local authority who have significant pressures in placing young people in the area.



## Build

I am very pleased to report the builders, designers and a plethora of extremely talented people are ensuring the build is making timely progress. Despite the changeable weather (having toured the site in both scorching sun and decidedly cold wet conditions) we can now observe the dimensions of the different specialist spaces, the site and whole school overall and this certainly adds to the excitement about completion - still scheduled for July 24.



**CAROLINE PLACE**  
**HEAD TEACHER DESIGNATE**



# SPRING COMMON ACADEMY



We started the new school year with a refined focus on learning. The classes had been tweaked to enable closer T&L strategies to all the needs in the room. This change of approach has allowed classes to truly work within our curriculum pathways. As always, we continue to reflect and change as necessary to ensure the best experiences to our learners, and welcome parental views of our offer.

Over this term we have utilised opportunities to be involved in the community. Including reflection on Remembrance Day and recently involving many of our KS3/4 students singing Christmas carols in the market square. As you read this, we would have recently opened up the school for our annual Christmas Fair. Organised by our students and is always a fun event for our younger pupils.

I continue to be proud of the achievements our young people make. Many have overcome anxiety in this changeable time of year and have continued to shine in school assemblies and happy to share their learning to guests and visitors.

Finally, as we reflect on the term and look forward to the new year. I wish Rebecca all the best in her new role as Head Teacher. She has been able to be in school and enable a comprehensive transition and she will be able to continue Spring Common's commitment to offering a quality provision to our community.



**ALEX TOMKINS**  
**HEAD TEACHER**



**Ofsted**  
**Outstanding**  
**Provider**



# THE CENTRAL TEAM



We are pleased to share some significant updates from our department. This term, auditors visited us, and we are delighted to announce that we have successfully finalized the audit process. The Audited Financial Statements have been meticulously produced and officially signed off, reflecting the dedication and hard work of our entire team.

On a personal note, we are thrilled to welcome Karen Brown as our new Management Accountant. This role is pivotal in supporting the finance department, and Karen's expertise and skills make her a valuable addition to our team. Her insights and contributions are sure to enhance our financial management capabilities.

However, it is also with mixed emotions that we inform you of Genevieve Cowcher's impending retirement in early 2024. Genevieve has been a cornerstone of the Central Team, and her absence will undoubtedly be felt. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for her dedication to the Trust, and wish her nothing but the best in her well-deserved retirement.

Thank you all for your hard work and commitment. Let's continue to strive for excellence in the upcoming year.

## THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT



It has been a busy and successful term for Horizons Education Trust. We are delighted to have recruited a receptionist at RMA SN, we have also increased our leadership team at Spring Common Academy. These appointments showcase our commitment to the continuation of supporting our staff, pupils and their families.

We have seen our vice-chair Mark Williams move into the role of Chair of Trustees and I would like to thank Mark for his continued support of the Trust.

Acknowledging the paramount role of technology in a modern curriculum, we have procured further IT hardware, encompassing laptops, iPads and interactive whiteboards to be allocated throughout our academies. This initiative bolsters our capacity to deliver the school curriculum efficiently and adapt to the evolving landscape of education.

Demonstrating a proactive approach to compliance, trust-wide GDPR refresher training was implemented in November, 2023. In addition our GDPR Policy has been updated to accommodate the inclusion of AI in reference to this "new horizon" in modern technology.

Pay Awards for both Teachers and Support Staff have also been applied at the nationally agreed levels.

Celebrations are in order as our Barton Road, Wisbech build concluded successfully, leading to the opening of the fully operational Riverside Meadows - Wisbech Green in September 2023. Additionally, our long-term project, Prestley Wood Academy, has continued to progress steadily remaining on target for completion in July 2024.

These milestones are landmark achievements that the whole team can be very proud of, ultimately leading to the exciting expansion of Horizons Education Trust.

We have worked with our colleagues and parents on future term dates. It was decided to align with the local authorities proposed dates for 2024-2025 but I remind everyone that you can give your opinion on the local authorities proposed dates for 2025-2026 via this link - [Consultation on School Term and Holiday Dates 2025-2026](#).

I would lastly, like to take this opportunity to wish all of our colleagues, pupils and their families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## JON-JAMES PANTHER, OPERATIONS MANAGER



It has been an exciting six months at Horizons Education Trust as we continue to expand our communications channels and drive content from the classroom to our digital platforms. We are diligently working to enhance the way we connect and share information with our whole school communities. With great enthusiasm I can share our efforts to develop our school and Trust presence across Facebook and Linked In respectively.

Linked In is a space where ideas can flourish, and partnerships can be formed, ultimately enriching the educational experience we offer. To continue to grow our network, I invite you to follow and connect with us via the Linked In Horizons Education Trust page.

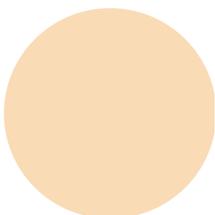
Simultaneously, our Academies' presence on Facebook allows us to engage with our local community, parents, and guardians in a more casual and interactive manner. We continue to share updates and celebrate achievements, creating a supportive environment where everyone feels involved and valued. These platforms serve as a bridge, connecting our schools with the families we serve, fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose, and we are seeing increased engagement from our communities as a result of this output.

I would like to thank the teams across our family of schools for their concerted efforts in managing events, fundraisers and sharing the celebrations of our pupils, which we are always so delighted to recognise and share with our wider audiences. In particular, raising a magnificent combined £595.62 across our family of Academies for Children in Need, 2023 and a further spectacular £1178.77 from Spring Common Academy's Christmas Fair 2023.

Next year I look forward to supporting the roll out of each communications platform in support of the opening of Prestley Wood Academy, including building a website with our developer Juniper that this incredible school and its burgeoning community deserves.

Wishing you all a well earned and restful Christmas Holiday, I look forward to seeing what we can achieve in 2024.

## AMY SPITTLE, COMMUNICATIONS EXECUTIVE



# AN INTERVIEW WITH HEAD TEACHER, REBECCA GREIG



Rebecca Greig was recently appointed Head Teacher for Spring Common Academy, to start in January, 2024. She has taken the time to interview with us to tell us about her plans for the role, and excitement in joining Horizons Education Trust.

Joining us from another Outstanding school, we know that Rebecca will be bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to Spring Common Academy, and will help us to maintain the foundation of excellence that we strive to offer at Spring Common Academy.

**“I strongly believe in the power of education to positively transform lives.”**

**What motivated you to become a Headteacher for a Special Educational Needs school, and what excites you the most about this role?**

I strongly believe in the power of education to positively transform lives. Early on in my teaching career I chose to work with pupils who have Special Educational Needs (SEN) and quickly came to see what our pupils and students can achieve.

Serving as a Headteacher in a school for pupils with SEN is an incredibly privileged position from where we can enact change and improve the lives of pupils and students.

I am excited to play my part in ensuring that they are well-prepared for their next steps, reach their full potential and lead happy, healthy lives as citizens in the community.



**How would you describe your approach to creating a nurturing and inclusive environment for pupils with special educational needs?**

For me, it is really important that pupils are safe, happy and reaching their potential at school. Keeping pupils at the centre of school life and the decisions made go a long way to making sure that school is welcoming, nurturing and inclusive.

Other key elements are respect and equality, which come through in a school's values as well as in practical ways, including staff training and policies.

**Effective communication between school and parents is key. What kind of communication channels do you plan to establish to keep parents informed about their child's progress and school activities?**

Communication is a vital aspect of a school for pupils with Special Educational Needs. I will be communicating with families via the newsletters, letters and events in school. I have prepared a welcome letter to parents and carers noting how delighted I am to be headteacher here and added a little bit about myself and my plans for the school. This was sent out this term, and I believe sets the tone for my impending appointment.

For pupils and students, I have written a symbolized letter and made a short video introducing myself so that there is an accessible format for everyone.

I come from a similar SEN school where I have worked for 25 years, and I am excited to both learn new things at Spring Common Academy and apply the knowledge I have.

**A positive school culture makes a significant difference. How do you intend to promote and maintain a culture of understanding, acceptance, and kindness among students, staff, and parents within our school?**

It is essential that all pupils, families and staff feel welcome at school so that we can all fulfill our primary purpose - to educate and care for pupils. As headteacher I will be developing the school vision with pupils, parents and carers, staff, Governors and Horizons Education Trust based on understanding pupils' needs, our school community and working together positively and productively to support pupils in the best way possible. I will be working to maintain and improve the curriculum, behaviour, personal development and attendance and I will be keeping Safeguarding at the centre of what we do.

**We believe a supportive school environment is crucial for every child's development. How do you plan to ensure that our school remains a place where every child feels valued and supported?**

When I visited the school in October, I was struck by the strong sense of community and the warm relationships between pupils and staff. I come from a similar SEN school with a strong and supportive ethos and I will seek to replicate this.

My headship will value and maintain these school attributes and build on them. Keeping equality and pupil voice at the heart of decisions as well as celebrating success for everyone will ensure that Spring Common Academy continues to be a place where pupils' voices are heard and all are valued.

# WELCOME TO

## HEAD TEACHER, REBECCA GREIG



**How do you envision involving parents in their child's educational journey? Are there any special initiatives you plan to introduce?**

Parents and Carers are an essential element of the school community and they play an important part in their child's education. I will welcome feedback from families regularly and will make opportunities to do this. I will be starting off by holding a coffee morning at the start of term to get to know our families and will also be outside when pupils arrive and leave for the first week of term. We continue to hold regular events where parents and carers will be warmly welcomed to see the school at work.

**Celebrating achievements, big or small, boosts a child's confidence. How do you plan to celebrate the accomplishments of students with special educational needs, ensuring they feel proud of their progress?**

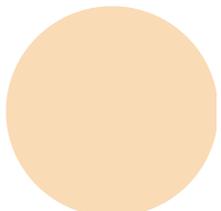
Celebrating success is important for all pupils and students. I plan to celebrate achievements in learning by giving positive and immediate feedback in lessons, in regular assemblies, certificates and ceremonies, via the newsletter and through Earwig - our online assessment system that parents and carers can access.

**What are your hopes and dreams for the students at our school, and how do you plan to work with parents to help turn these dreams into reality?**

I hope that Spring Common Academy continues to thrive and together we build on the firm foundation already established to become an even better version of the current school. I plan to build links with the other schools within the Trust, in particular, Prestley Wood Academy, to share best practice and move forward for the benefit of pupils and staff as an outward-facing school.

**"I hope that Spring Common Academy continues to thrive and together we build on the firm foundation already established to become an even better version of the current school."**

*“Serving as a Headteacher in a school for pupils with Special Educational Needs is an incredibly privileged position”*





**HORIZONS**  
EDUCATION TRUST

WISHING YOU  
a Merry  
Christmas  
and a  
WONDERFUL  
New Year