

# Michael Hall School

Kidbrooke Park, Priory Road, Forest Row, East Sussex RH18 5JA

**Inspection date**

5 March 2024

**Overall outcome**

**The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

#### *Paragraph 2(1) to 2(1)(b)(i), 3 and 3(d)*

- At the last standard inspection in October 2022, weaknesses in how the curriculum was being delivered were identified. Some independent school standards (the standards) were found to be unmet. Qualitative weaknesses related broadly to transition between kindergarten and lower school, and in the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A progress monitoring inspection held in October 2023 identified improvements in transition between kindergarten and lower school, but that there was still work to do relating to provision for pupils with SEND.
- Much has been achieved since the last progress monitoring inspection. An action plan was written and has been implemented. Some actions are ongoing. However, leaders have considerably strengthened provision for pupils with SEND in a short period of time.
- A new inclusion coordinator role has been created. As a result, a new, appropriately experienced and qualified inclusion coordinator has joined the school and has already made a big impact on the quality of provision for pupils with SEND. The SEND support team has been restructured. The way the team supports pupils and staff, including the school's pastoral team, has been completely revised.
- A programme of professional development for staff linked to understanding and supporting the needs of pupils with SEND has started. This will be ongoing with a planned programme of training from internal and external experts over time.
- A robust programme of pupil progress meetings has been put in place. Leaders are able to track the progress of pupils with SEND more effectively. Staff are now expected to support pupils with SEND in the classroom, rather than deferring to the SEND support team, as was the case in the past.
- New support plans for pupils with SEND have been introduced. Staff are able to access specialist advice and guidance to ensure that the plans are fit for purpose. As a result, they are able to adapt teaching to meet the needs of these pupils better. They are also

more confident in planning learning for pupils with SEND because they now have access to the tools, knowledge and professional support that were lacking in the past.

- The restructuring of the learning support team has created capacity to provide additional help when pupils need it. A much more joined-up approach between class teachers and specialist staff and therapists is evident. Planned interventions which take place both in and outside of the classroom are also in place for those pupils who need them.
- Classroom visits showed that staff are much more aware of the needs of pupils and adapting teaching when required. They are adapting teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. Simple initiatives such as introducing movement breaks, visual timetables and sensory exercises are in place. Leaders describe a 'massive' change in working practices which have also impacted positively on pupils' behaviour and engagement in learning. Pupils themselves are more positive about the support they are getting.
- Leaders have made big strides in a short period of time to improve the quality of education the school provides for pupils with SEND. Leaders and trustees know this work is not finished. They have sensible plans to improve provision further, based on ongoing self-evaluation of what is working well and what the key next steps should be.
- The school now meets all the previously unmet requirements in this part.

### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

#### *Paragraph 7 to 7(b), 32(1) and 32(1)(c)*

- At the last standard inspection in October 2022, safeguarding was judged to be effective and all relevant independent school standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils were found to be met.
- At the previous progress monitoring inspection conducted in October 2023, all relevant standards that were checked linked to the welfare, health and safety of pupils continued to be met.
- The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and complies with current guidelines. The school's single central record of checks on adults at the school continues to be maintained diligently. Recruitment processes for staff are appropriate with effective oversight of leaders and trustees. The culture to safeguard pupils remains strong.
- The school continues to meet the requirements in this part.

### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

#### *Paragraph 34(1) to 34(1)(b)*

- At the last standard inspection, some of the requirements of part 8 were not met. This was also the case at the last progress monitoring inspection, though that inspection acknowledged leaders' convincing work to make sustainable improvements. That inspection also acknowledged that trustees had clear arrangements in place for checking what leaders were telling them about the school's strengths and improvement priorities. It also recorded that collectively, trustees were well informed about the school's work. This continues to be the case.
- Leaders have continued their work to improve the quality of education the school provides. This is particularly the case for pupils with SEND. Leaders and staff have a better understanding of the requirements detailed in statutory guidance. Staff also have

access to a new online special educational needs resource hub set up by the inclusion coordinator.

- A trustee with specific oversight of provision for pupils with SEND has completed a range of appropriate training linked to the role. Evidence seen during this inspection shows clearly that leaders are now being held closely to account for their work in this area.
- Important changes have been made to the leadership and oversight of the school's SEND provision. These are both strategic and operational in nature. The day-to-day work to support pupils with SEND in classrooms is now much stronger. Staffing structures and systems to support pupils with SEND have been reviewed and revised.
- Leaders' work has not been restricted to the areas identified in the action plan which was approved by the Department for Education (DfE) in February 2024. Subject leadership continues to be strengthened. The board of trustees continues to recruit members with suitable experience, including from the field of education. Work to ensure that the transition between kindergarten and class one continues. Good practice evident in relation to supporting children with SEND in kindergarten is being shared more widely. A more joined-up approach to ensuring that staff work together for the good of all pupils, including those with SEND, is evident.
- The school was judged to require improvement and unmet standards were found at the last standard inspection in October 2022. The first progress monitoring inspection in October 2023 found that solid improvements had been made but the impact of leaders' actions was not yet clear enough. This monitoring inspection has found that the trajectory and pace of improvement has been maintained. The impact of leaders' work to improve the school and ensure that the standards are met is clear to see. Leaders are now displaying the capacity to maintain the momentum and ensure that the standards continue to be met over time.
- The school now meets all the previously unmet requirements in this part.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

### **The school now meets the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
    - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
  - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons.

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

## School details

Unique reference number	114625
DfE registration number	845/6037
Inspection number	10333745

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Waldorf School
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	421
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	51
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Michael Hall Trust Ltd
Chair	Natalie Michaels
Principal	Sarah Stokes
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,030 to £15,825
Telephone number	01342 822 275
Website	<a href="http://www.michaelhall.co.uk/">www.michaelhall.co.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:reception@michaelhall.co.uk">reception@michaelhall.co.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	11 to 13 October 2022

## Information about this school

- Michael Hall is an independent school for pupils aged two to 19. It was the first Steiner Waldorf school to be established in the United Kingdom. It is owned and operated by Michael Hall Trust Ltd. The school is based in extensive grounds, of which it has exclusive use.

- The school received its last standard inspection in October 2022 and was judged as requires improvement. Since that inspection, the DfE has granted the school permission to admit children from the age of two.
- The school does not currently use any alternative providers.
- The school has an exemption from the learning and development aspects of the early years foundation stage framework.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The inspection was carried out without notice.
- This was the second progress monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement with unmet independent school standards at its last standard inspection in October 2022. The first progress monitoring inspection took place on 3 October 2023.
- As a result of unmet standards identified at the first progress monitoring inspection, the proprietor was required by the DfE to produce a further statutory action plan on 23 November 2023. The action plan was assessed by Ofsted on 15 January 2024 and found to be acceptable by the DfE on 5 February 2024.
- The inspector met with the principal and other leaders to discuss the work done to improve the school since the last inspection.
- The inspector met with the chair of the board of trustees. He also met with a representative group of pupils, including older students from upper school.
- The inspector toured the site and visited lessons to see learning in action.
- To consider the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, the inspector reviewed the single central record of recruitment checks and the school's child protection and safeguarding policy. He met with the designated safeguarding lead and other leaders to review training and procedures and sampled records kept about safeguarding concerns.
- The inspector reviewed various other relevant policies and documents linked to the standards.

## Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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