



What to expect in the Middle School





What to expect in the Middle School ...

If you are looking for a short introduction to the Middle School years - Class 6 to Class 8 (pupils aged 12-14), we hope this will be a starting point for you. Whether you are visiting us for an Open Day, have a child in the Lower School or are looking for an alternative schooling, this booklet aims to answer a few of your questions and give you a picture of life in the Middle School at Michael Hall.

We are happy to answer any further questions you may have, and look forward to welcoming you.

Jacqueline Courtenay
Head of Lower & Middle School

An Overview of Each Year Group and The Child's Development

The Class 6 Child: Looking for justice and developing the inner life

Children in Class 6 stand at the beginning of the journey through adolescence to young adulthood. Limbs grow longer, bodies stronger and heavier and minds become sharper.

Class 6 pupils want to experience the world and make it their own, while concepts such as justice and loyalty are fiercely debated. Pupils are ready for a new kind of teaching, for new subjects, and they want and need teachers who can be matter-of-fact, clear and, above all, fair.

Although students will still find delight in beautiful things, it is the tools of a trade that hold a special fascination as the light of conceptual thinking dawns for them. Touching and holding the physical earth will enable an eager geologist to discover the secrets of earth's minerals. The phenomena of acoustics, heat, magnetism and optics are explored through concrete application and experimentation. The culture of Ancient Rome is studied, with its emphasis on practical technology and law, and later on the study of the Middle Ages provides an insight into the development of the human inner world, which the pupils themselves are becoming more aware of every day. Mid-year in Class 6, the teachers have the task of facilitating this shift, supporting and inspiring a group that includes both children who are physically and emotionally still in childhood and those who have already moved into a new phase, one characterised by the physical changes of puberty and a more wary, self-sufficient attitude.

Main Lessons include: Ancient Rome, The Middle Ages, Physics, Drama, Geology, European Geography, Geometry and Business Maths.



Sample timetable Class 6

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Lesson 1 08:15-09:05 | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson |
| Lesson 2 09:10-10:10 | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson |
| Break 10:10-10:35 | | | | | |
| Lesson 3 10:40-11:30 | Numeracy | Outdoor Education | Recorders | Eurythmy | Eurythmy |
| Lesson 4 11:35-12:25 | Literacy | German | Wellbeing | Choir | Gym |
| Lunch 12:30-13:20 | | | | | |
| Lesson 5 13:25-14:15 | Art./Woodwork | Numeracy | German | Numeracy | French |
| Lesson 6 14:20-15:10 | Gym | Handwork | Woodwork/Art | Literacy | Orchestra |

The Class 7: On a journey of exploration and discovery

“The Age of Discovery” is the watchword for Class 7. The pupils are outwardly active, with a hunger for learning about the world and a yearning for independence. At the same time, physical and psychological stirrings can create bursts of energy or subdued introspection. It is a tremendous time for both outer and inner learning.

For the Class 7 teacher, it is a bit like being the captain of a ship: the captain is responsible for steering the crew on an incredible journey through stormy waters and becalmed seas, following the lode star of the individual potential of each child at the same time as building a sense of community and social responsibility.

This metaphorical journey enables the children to explore rich new veins: the geography of the world, the lives of fabled discoverers, poetry, what is healthy for human life and the life of the planet; to unveil the mysteries of chemistry and physics, to experience the richness of the Renaissance and to learn about the Northern Reformation. A teacher is no longer bound to sequential narrative, but can begin to introduce a topic or biography connected to the curriculum content with a symptom, a characteristic scene or event that speaks to the essence of a person’s life and striving. The use of biography enables the pupils to gain insights about their own struggles and explorations by hearing and working on the lives of others who can provide inspiration and example.

Main Lessons include: The Italian Renaissance, The Northern Reformation, Creative Writing, Physics and Chemistry, Astronomy, The Age of Exploration and Discovery, World Geography, Health and Hygiene, Astronomy and Algebra.



Sample timetable Class 7

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Lesson 1 08:15-09:05 | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson |
| Lesson 2 09:10-10:10 | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson |
| Break 10:10-10:35 | | | | | |
| Lesson 3 10:40-11:30 | Numeracy | Wellbeing | Outdoor Education | Art/Woodwork | Literacy |
| Lesson 4 11:35-12:25 | Choir | Woodwork/Handwork | German | Spanish | German |
| Lunch 12:30-13:20 | | | | | |
| Lesson 5 13:25-14:15 | Gym | Recorders | Eurythmy | Numeracy | Gym |
| Lesson 6 14:20-15:10 | Literacy | Spanish | Numeracy | Handwork/Art | Orchestra |

The Class 8 Child: Looking out into the world

Class 8 pupils begin to have a broader outlook than before, developing a passion against injustice and an ability to stand back and gain perspective - both fruits of an increasingly independent outlook. History lessons focus on the struggle for freedom, equality and brotherhood, examining the revolutions that took place in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the world wars of the 20th century. Often, students explore the lives of iconic figures who epitomise their time and offer inspiration, or warning, to ours. Geography is considered from a world perspective, connections are made to the life of the present, and contemporary events are discussed with a striving to see the relationship between human attitudes and what occurs in the world.

Class 8 pupils are given four major projects during the year - a personal project, a full length play to be performed in public, the design and maintenance of a class garden, and a challenging class trip. The personal project spans several months, allowing the pupils to learn a new skill, which they write about and present to an audience. In their play, the pupils work as a team and gain confidence through an artistic process. The qualities of teamwork, persistence and consequentiality are further developed in the gardening project. Class 8 trips usually involve physical challenges such as abseiling, high ropes or white-water rafting - tests of courage which give a great sense of achievement once met and fulfilled.

Main Lessons include: History - The Age of Revolutions, World Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Physiology, Drama, Meteorology and Platonic Solids.



Sample timetable Class 8

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| Lesson 1 08:15-09:05 | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson |
| Lesson 2 09:10-10:10 | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson | Main Lesson |
| Break 10:10-10:35 | | | | | |
| Lesson 3 10:40-11:30 | German | Literacy | Numeracy | Eurythmy | Numeracy |
| Lesson 4 11:35-12:25 | Extra Main Lesson | Wellbeing | Art./Woodwork | Outdoors | Science |
| Lunch 12:30-13:20 | | | | | |
| Lesson 5 13:25-14:15 | Literacy | German | Gym | Woodwork/Art | Spanish |
| Lesson 6 14:20-15:10 | Numeracy | Gym | Spanish | Choir | Orchestra |

Middle School FAQs

What is a Main Lesson?

Main Lesson is the first lesson of the day across the school including Upper School. This lesson is from 8.15am to 10.15am and starts off with some music, singing, recitation or rhythmic game to warm up. There is often a short practice mathematics or English to keep skills honed followed by the main subject that is being taught in that block and a block usually lasts 3-4 weeks. This enables teachers to teach subjects immersively and with great depth. The subject part of the lesson is absorbing new content and re-elaborating what has already been learnt often presented in a dynamic way including followed by a task or assignment involving written or illustrative book work. There is a focus on high quality presentation in a Main Lesson book. In addition to the mathematics and English Main Lesson blocks and morning short practice, there are also 2 or 3 50-minute practice lessons throughout the week as practice is key for these skill based subjects.

What is the major difference between the Lower School and the Middle School?

Apart from the change of building which is shared with some Upper School classes, Middle School pupils are developing the capacity to understand cause and effect, and this new ability is addressed both in the curriculum and in the expectations regarding learning and behaviour.

Will there be more academic focus in the Middle School?

The development of solid skills in English and mathematics, the sciences, languages, geography and history is very much part of the Middle School focus, and enables pupils to begin their GCSE tasks in Class 9 with confidence.

How does the curriculum meet the stage of development in the Middle School?

Middle School pupils are entering into puberty and adolescence, and their newly acquired critical faculty is met by the introduction of exact observation in the sciences and the transition from myth to history. Innate teenage rebellion is met with a theme of revolution in Class 8 where students look more closely at this theme in a constructive way, For example, politics in history and paradigm shifts in science.

Is the timetable similar to the Lower School?

Yes, in that there are 6 periods in the day, with Main Lesson taking place in the first 2 periods every day.



Are there new subjects in the Middle School?

In Class 6, Middle School orchestra, woodwork and gardening are introduced. ICT and joinery and weekly pre GCSE focused science lesson are introduced in Class 8.

What are the expectations of Middle School pupils?

Middle School pupils are expected to respect the school work ethos, to show respect for teachers, peers and visitors and to behave with consideration to others at all times, showing tolerance and acceptance of difference.

How do teachers effect a smooth transition from Lower School to Middle School?

The experience of moving from a building where the pupils are the oldest, biggest and most experienced to another where everyone is older, more knowledgeable and bigger than you. Both the Class Teachers and the Subject Teachers guide the transition process in a sensitive manner, gradually encouraging independence in such a way that the children feel comfortable both socially and in their work.

How do teachers effect a smooth transition from Middle School to Upper School?

In Class 8 there are several milestones towards independent learning: these include a major personal project, and challenging Class play (e.g. Shakespeare). All of these require the stamina, creativity and social interaction which will prepare the pupils for the Upper School. Social, practical, academic and artistic skills are brought to a culmination which can then diversify in the choices available in the Upper School.

Will pupils be ready for GCSEs at the beginning of Class 9?

The GCSE courses run for almost two years, and during that time the academic skills required will be honed in order to enable students to achieve good results. In Class 8, various skills in essay writing are developed, a dedicated science lesson focuses on pre GCSE skills and a broad range of mathematical skills for GCSE are worked on.



Is there streaming in the Middle School?

One of the key Steiner-Waldorf principles is the value of groups of mixed ability, and difference of ability is met by differentiation for pupils with learning differences or those who are gifted and talented so streaming isn't introduced until Class 7 where mathematics is streamed.

What languages are taught in the Middle School?

Spanish and German are continued in the Middle School.

How are the sciences taught in the Middle School?

Pupils require teachers to have a more objective orientation in the Middle School. Main Lesson blocks in physics and chemistry begin as the children gain the ability to see the world causally and they need to develop the emerging critical thinking faculty. Initially an emotional connection to the phenomena will be awakened before the intrinsic qualities can be grasped in cognitive activity. An example of this is in Class 6 when the physics of sound are introduced and different methods of seeing different pitches and volumes are engaged with including moving up and down a string on a stringed instrument, the visible effects of sound on a Chladni Plate, the differing quantities of water in bottles which are blown across for different notes and the delay in seeing a sound generated from a distance before hearing it to name a few.

When do pupils start using computers?

ICT is introduced in Class 8 and pupils are taught effective internet research skills and how to use word processor, spreadsheet and presentation software.

Are there additional sports in the Middle School?

As well as basketball, handball, hockey, rugby and orienteering there are various after school clubs available for Middle School pupils.





What musical provision is there in the Middle School?

Music and singing are weekly subjects, as is the Middle School Orchestra. Pupils can have private tuition during school time on their chosen instrument (provided by Peri Teachers), and these lessons work on a rotational basis in order not to miss the same lesson in the timetable. There are opportunities to play for performances, ensemble groups and festivals where music is played and sometimes performances of musicals.

What sort of learning support is offered in the Middle School?

Yes, some children's needs can be met, we have a Learning Support department as part of our Inclusion Team.

How much homework will my child receive in the Middle School?

This will vary according to the Main Lesson, and will increase as the pupils become older; homework will include Maths, English, Main Lesson and Languages. GCSE students can expect up to an hour of homework at night, so Class 8 pupils need to get used to a substantial amount of time dedicated to homework.



The Admissions process:

To apply for a place for your child, please scan the QR code or apply via our website www.michaelhall.co.uk/admissions/apply

After we have received your online application we will be in touch to request further details and documents to support your child's application.

You will then be invited for interview with the Class Teacher(s) and our Inclusion team. Taster days are also available on request following interview.

For any queries regarding admissions please contact admissions@michaelhall.co.uk



What parents say about Michael Hall

“The school is beautiful, the environment is thoughtful and nurturing.”

“The children & young people are truly nurtured & valued as the individuals they are.”

“The school has managed to hold onto its deep sense of community. The children are still beautifully open and unique, and the curriculum rich and diverse.”

“The Class 8 projects have had lasting impacts on our children.”

