

Michael Hall School

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

Inspection dates

20 November 2019

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 4

- At the time of the previous inspection there were weaknesses in the school's curriculum and assessment policy and practice. The curriculum policy, plans, and schemes of work did not take enough account of pupils' ages and needs, including the needs of any pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's assessment framework was also judged to be ineffective.
- Leaders planned to review the curriculum policy and schemes of work and audit the provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders also planned to work with the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF) to develop a consistent approach to assessment across the school.
- The curriculum policy is now fit for purpose and meets all of the requirements outlined in the independent school standards. It explains how pupils' different starting points will be taken in to account and how the curriculum includes all the required areas.
- The curriculum policy explains the ambition for pupils with SEND to do well. This provision has been audited and pupils with SEND are now receiving more effective support in class, rather than being withdrawn for catch-up work. Leaders responsible for pupils with SEND are supporting teachers to enable them to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- A consistent system of planning and assessment (known by staff as 'purple folders') has been introduced across the main school. This system has been devised with the SWSF and is already helping teachers to make sure the content of the new schemes of work is covered. It also allows teachers to assess how well pupils are progressing through these schemes. Leaders are helping teachers to work together to moderate the accuracy of these assessments.
- Leaders have ensured that these standards are now met.

Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(2)(h), 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(g)

- At the time of the previous inspection teaching was found to be inadequate, although there were some strengths in the kindergarten and sixth form. As a result, there were

unmet standards relating to teaching because it did not enable all pupils to learn and make progress.

- The action plan outlined how staff would receive additional training and how the quality of teaching would be regularly monitored by leaders. Leaders planned to raise expectations about the quality of teaching in the main school.
- Strengths in teaching that were seen in the main school during the previous inspection including in music, modern foreign languages and handwork have remained. Teaching in the kindergarten and sixth form were also stronger at the time of the previous inspection and were not considered as part of this progress monitoring visit.
- Teachers have been positive about the new programme of lesson visits and monitoring and are happy to share and discuss their practice. However, this programme of lesson visits and observations has not yet led to any measurable improvements in teaching, especially in mathematics and English. There is still inconsistency between teaching and learning in parallel classes in some year groups. This is because teachers prioritise their own areas of interest or expertise.
- Staff have been identified to lead mathematics and literacy. They have started to support colleagues in these subjects. However, this is not yet having an impact on improving the progress made by pupils. Leaders have identified that some class teachers do not have the subject knowledge or expertise needed to teach the planned mathematics curriculum. In the last few weeks some classes in Year 9 (class 8) have been identified to be taught by a mathematic specialist. This is a positive change, but it has not been in place long enough to help pupils catch up.
- The curriculum in mathematics has now been outlined for each class. However, there is not enough flexibility to allow the work set to match the ability of pupils in the class. Some pupils told the inspector that they have not had any challenging mathematics work this year. Teachers use repetition well in mathematics to help pupils to remember key number facts; however, what pupils in some year groups are being asked to remember is too easy.
- The director of learning is gradually putting in place systems and processes to monitor teaching and delegate leadership responsibilities. However, progress since the previous inspection has been too slow and pupils are continuing to underachieve because of weak teaching.
- These standards continue to be unmet.

Paragraph 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii)

- Careers education and guidance were not in place for older pupils at the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders planned a full-scale review of careers education and planned to make a dedicated page on the school website with careers information. These actions have been completed.
- There is now an appropriate programme of careers education activities for pupils in Year 8 (class 7) upwards. Ambitions in this area are high and members of staff responsible for careers have made strong progress in developing the programme. They know that the

Year 7 (class 6) programme needs to focus more on employability and understanding contemporary career options, rather than studying historical employment

- Leaders have ensured that these standards are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The safeguarding policy was updated in September 2019 to reflect new national and local guidance. The policy is fit for purpose. Parts of the policy are highlighted in red, to show they are new or how they relate to the particular context of this school. This is very helpful.
- There are no new concerns about safeguarding, and arrangements in the school continue to be effective. For example, any concerns about school staff are referred to the local authority's designated officer for advice, as required.
- Leaders need to ensure that strong lines of accountability for safeguarding continue. This is to ensure that the strong processes the school has become accustomed to are not watered down by changes in leadership or the delegation of tasks.
- The safeguarding policy is published on the school website, as required.
- These standards continue to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)

- Substantial weaknesses in the leadership of teaching and learning were found at the time of the previous inspection. These weaknesses were accepted by trustees. However, there were relative strengths in the operational leadership of the school and in the leadership of personal development and well-being of pupils.
- The action plan included an ambition to appoint an independent education trustee and an educational lead. A full audit of leadership capacity and structures was due to be carried out.
- An educational trustee was appointed in May 2019 and further trustees with experience in education are being appointed. There has been a change in chair of trustees. Some trustees do not fully understand their roles and go beyond their remit
- A director of learning was appointed in August 2019 to work alongside the director of operations. However, trustees did not make clear their roles and responsibilities. This has led to some confusion in the leadership of the school especially in terms of lines of accountability and line management of staff.
- There has been a breakdown in communication between senior leaders and this has slowed progress. Each director's expertise is not being fully utilised.
- Leaders do not have a strong overview of the quality of teaching, despite the introduction of monitoring activities. There is limited leadership capacity within the teaching team in the main school to make the improvements needed. Improvements to teaching in the main school have been too slow, very recent and fragile.

- Trustees and leaders have not worked together effectively to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met consistently. New appointments and temporary promotions have not yet had the impact on raising standards that the trustees desired.
- These standards continue to be unmet.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet 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, as set out in the annex of this report. 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

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if—
 - 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.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are—
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that—
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

School details

Unique reference number	114625
DfE registration number	845/6037
Inspection number	10124696

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	Other independent school
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	422
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	54
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Council of Trustees of the Michael Hall School
Chair	Sean Rafferty
Headteacher	Davina Skinner (Director of Operations) Paul Farr (Director of Learning)
Annual fees (day pupils)	Up to £12,670
Telephone number	01342 822275
Website	http://www.michaelhall.co.uk/
Email address	davina.skinner@michaelhall.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	26–28 March 2019

Information about this school

- The school's previous standard inspection took place in March 2019. The school was judged to be inadequate.

- Michael Hall School is a co-educational, independent school for pupils aged from three to 19. It adheres to the international Steiner Waldorf curriculum developed by the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner.
- Michael Hall School is a charitable trust company called Michael Hall School Ltd. The board of the company is known as 'the council'. Council members are governors, trustees and company directors.
- The chair of trustees and membership of the board of trustees has changed since the previous inspection.
- The school has an approved exemption from some aspects of the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage.
- The school does not use alternative providers.
- The boarding provision has currently been 'paused' by the proprietor, prior to a review.
- The director of learning took up his post in August 2019 and is currently employed to lead the school alongside the director of operations.

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.
- This was the first progress monitoring visit and was conducted with no notice to the school.
- In March 2019 the school received a standard inspection and was judged to not comply with a number of the independent school standards.
- The Department for Education (DfE) required the school to produce a statutory action plan. The plan was evaluated by Ofsted in July 2019 and was accepted by the DfE as appropriate.
- During the inspection I met with the director of learning, director of operations and the bursar. I met with a group of teachers, the special educational needs coordinator and staff responsible for careers education. I had a meeting with a trustee and a telephone conversation with the chair of trustees. I visited lessons with the director of learning and other leaders. During the lesson visits I talked to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. I looked at a range of school documentation, including safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

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 subparagraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 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;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

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.

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