

Admissions Process

2021/2022

Thank you for expressing an interest in Michael Hall.

This booklet is designed to inform you of everything you need to know before submitting an application for your child to join us.

Table of Contents

Admissions Policy	Pages 3 to 6
Some Frequently Asked Questions	Pages 7 and 8
Michael Hall School Classes and their state/independent equivalents	Page 9
Times of the School Day	Page 10
Afternoon Clubs	Page 10

POLICY STATEMENT

Michael Hall is a comprehensive Steiner Waldorf School. The School accepts children with a wide range of abilities and applications are welcomed on behalf of all children. The School believes that all children have individual needs, and aims to meet those needs as best as possible taking into consideration the child's age and developmental stage whilst also taking into account the available resources and expertise within the School.

Where the School operates two or more parallel classes for children in the same age group, the school will decide which class group to assign a particular applicant to, based on our objective of creating broadly balanced, socially cohesive, mixed ability classes.

The aim of our admissions procedure is to identify and admit children who will benefit from our education and who will contribute to and benefit from the ethos and activities of our school community. It is our responsibility as professionals to ensure that any decision we come to about entry into the school will be the best for the child, as well as existing pupils.

Michael Hall is committed to equal treatment for all, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or social background. We do not discriminate in any way regarding entry to the School.

Michael Hall School is structured in three parts:

- *Early Years*, comprising Parent and Child Group and Kindergarten
- *Lower School*, comprising Classes 1 to 8
- *Upper School*, comprising Classes 9 to 12

(Applicants to Class 8 are treated as part of Upper School for admissions purposes).

Although Michael Hall aims to provide a complete education for every child admitted, admission to one part of the school does not guarantee admission to another. A child initially entering Early Years will undergo a further admissions process before being granted entry to Class 1.

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

The Kindergarten and Lower School class group

Our teaching approach places a great deal of importance on the class as a social group and on the class teacher as focal point for the children's learning. We do have teaching assistants in some of our classrooms to support the class teacher/kindergarten teacher, but in most cases we are not able to admit a child who is expected to need a dedicated one-to-one assistant.

Meeting the needs of the individual child

Michael Hall does not unlawfully discriminate in any way regarding entry of pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs, provided that our learning support provision and teachers can offer the child the support they need and/or our site can reasonably accommodate them. The School will discuss thoroughly with parents (and, if appropriate, their medical

advisors) the adjustments that can reasonably be made to support the child should they become a pupil at the school. *If at any stage it is necessary for a pupil to be privately assessed by an outside agency such as an Educational Psychologist, this would be charged to the parents.* We strongly advise parents of children with special educational needs or physical or mental disabilities to discuss their child's requirements with the School before interview so that we can make adequate provision for him/her. Parents should provide with the Application Form a copy of an educational psychologist's report or a medical report if they have one.

ADMISSIONS PROCESS - ADVICE TO PROSPECTIVE PARENTS

Prospective applicants to the School should contact the Admissions Department in the first instance. As our approach to education is distinctive, it is important that parents understand our methods and educational philosophy, as a mutual understanding of child development and our curriculum between parents and the school is highly beneficial to pupils. It is therefore advised that parents attend an Open Morning before submitting a formal application.

A formal application can then be submitted online with the necessary supporting documentation and (non-refundable) application fee. If you wish to apply for fee assistance, a fee assistance application should be submitted simultaneously. Please carefully read the eligibility guidelines listed on the *New Parents' Application Form* (available to download from the Fee Assistance page on the school website), before applying. Admission interviews will be conducted for prospective pupils, usually with either the Kindergarten Teacher, designated Class Teacher or Guardian, along with a member of the Learning Support team and in some cases a Eurythmy therapist.

The candidate pupil is then assessed as described above and you will be advised of the School's decision. It may be that further assessment will be required and/or that your child will be asked to come into School, join the age-appropriate class or kindergarten group and within this time have further assessments. This is usually for the purposes of assessing whether the School has the necessary resources to support your child's education.

We reserve the right to halt the Admissions process at any point if in our judgement we feel we have clear evidence to show that we will be unable to meet the educational, pastoral or social needs of the applicant child.

Admission to Kindergarten is for a minimum of three sessions per week on entry, increasing to five sessions a week as soon as possible. Attendance for five sessions a week is mandatory for all students after their fifth birthday.

Admission to Parent and Child groups usually follows a free taster session and the completion of an application form. Children can be any age between birth and three years of age. In all cases, the applicant's parents must sign and return the school contract before their child will be permitted to join the school.

ASSESSMENT OF APPLICANTS

Applicants to the school are assessed (subject to the above) for entry to the school by the following methods:

1. Review of reports from previous schools and attendance records.
2. Formal assessments by our Learning Support Department and our Eurythmy Therapy Department. The former assesses Special Educational Needs and the latter assesses the child's development in movement. If an applicant is asked to return for further assessments, these assessments will be carried out by the above and/or an experienced Class Teacher. These further assessments do not normally apply in Early Years with the exception of applicants who are expected to transfer to Class 1 within 12 months of entry.
3. Interviews and/or observation of the child by the prospective Class teacher or Class guardian.
4. In cases of doubt or where more information is required the school may contact the applicant's present school, and/or require a report from an educational psychologist and/or hold discussions with the child's medical advisors in order to assess the child's needs before reaching a decision on a particular application. We may also invite your child to join the class for a few days before a final decision is made.

There is no formal assessment of applicants to Parent and Child Groups, though the school does reserve the right to refuse admission at its discretion.

COMPLAINTS

If you are not satisfied with the school's admission process or the decision that we reach, you should put your complaint in writing to the Admissions Officer within five days of the date of our admissions decision. The complaint will then be dealt with in accordance with the School's Complaints Procedure, a copy of which is available on our website. In the event of the complaint not being resolved you are entitled to contact the Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information). A list of ADR providers can be found on: <https://www.tradingstandards.uk/commercial-services/adr-approved-bodies>

DATES FOR ADMISSION

Although exceptions are sometimes made, our normal dates for entry to the school are:

- Kindergarten: the first day of autumn and spring terms
- Classes 1 - 7: the first day of any term
- Classes 8 - 12: the first day of the school year

Kindergarten applicants who are only a term away from Class 1 entry may be accepted at the start of summer term at the school's discretion.

We will accept applications for admission at any time, but cannot guarantee to process any application received on or after 15th June in time for a September entry to the school.

CLASS SIZES AND PRIORITY FOR PLACES

Classes are normally considered full at the following sizes:

- For the Parent and Child Group, a maximum of 7 children from birth to 3 years old
- For the Kindergarten we regard a class as complete at 20
- For Classes 1 to 8, a class is deemed to be complete when, taking into account the resources available in the School, the addition of further students to the class would, in our opinion, have an adverse impact on the students already in the class. Although there is no fixed size for a Lower School class, this limit is typically reached at around 25 students
- For Classes 9 to 12, it is usually possible to adjust teaching arrangements to suit any size of year group, although in some cases availability of teaching spaces may place a practical limit on year group size
- When a class or year group is deemed to be complete, the School reserves the right to close the class or year group to new admissions. The decision to close a class is taken by the Education Management Team after appropriate consultation. All other admissions decisions are taken by the Faculty Chair.

WAITING LISTS PROCEDURE

The school operates a waiting list when a class is closed for new admissions. In order for a new class to be opened there must be at least 8 applications pending. The decision to open a new class is taken by the Senior Leadership Team after appropriate consultation.

SIBLINGS POLICY

Most siblings join us at Michael Hall. However, admission is not automatic and there may be occasions where the school judges that a sibling is likely to thrive better in a different academic environment.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

Why the Steiner Waldorf curriculum rather than the national curriculum?

Recent research into educational provision has tended to support the workings of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Furthermore it has shown that a well constructed curriculum such as ours does not require the degree of change that the national curriculum has undergone over the last decade and more.

We have the freedom to deliver a holistic education based on a detailed model of child development encompassing physical, emotional, intellectual and moral development. The key question is at what age is a given subject or educational approach appropriate. Each subject is brought to the children at the point when it will be most beneficial to their overall development.

Tell me about the Main Lesson?

Main Lesson is at the heart of Steiner Waldorf curriculum. From age 7 to 18, all students will spend a substantial part of each morning exploring a Main Lesson topic for a period of 3 - 4 weeks. This topic will be brought alive through a variety of activities that engage the students and reinforce the information naturally but effectively. Songs and recitation, discussion and storytelling, writing and illustration, music and movement enable students to really immerse themselves in a subject. Each Main Lesson topic has been carefully devised to meet the needs of the child at their particular stage of development.

Do you stream?

No. All pupils participate in all subjects with appropriate challenges set according to differing abilities, practised throughout. There may be some setting according to ability in Maths from Class 8.

My child loves sports. What sports does Michael Hall do?

How we inhabit our body matters and we can express our talents better if we are focused and present. Carefully chosen activities in the movement curriculum can enhance these qualities.

Gym and games begin in Class 3 (age 9) through energetic, imaginative games and simple creative gymnastics. The games and gymnastics curriculum evolves and slowly focuses more specific, skills-based activities and from Classes 6 and 7 (age 12-13), a wide variety of more formal sports are taught. Sports include archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, cricket, cross-country running, gymnastics, hockey, orienteering, rugby, softball, tennis, ultimate frisbee, sailing and volleyball.

Competition is a useful educational tool when introduced at the correct age and in the appropriate manner. We do believe in competition and we compete at a high standard in our selected sports. We do not teach sport as an end in itself but we educate through the medium of movement. Although the school produces some excellent athletes, this is not our primary aim.

We have a state of the art gym with extensive sporting ancillary facilities, including a climbing wall. We also have tennis courts and grounds for team games such as Softball. Basketball and Volleyball are the main sports where pupils compete with other schools.

Where do students go when they leave school?

At the completion of class 12 most students go to university and other Higher or Further Education establishments. Whatever their direction, they leave school well grounded and equipped to follow their chosen path. Students follow a broad variety of career paths: marine yachting, translator, Olympic rower, midwifery, medicine, advertising, child psychology, pilot, teaching, acting, genetics... the list goes on.

Can children get into university with a Steiner Waldorf education?

Yes. Pupils at Michael Hall sit GCSE's and A Level public examinations as well as European Portfolio Certificate, which can be used within applications to Further and Higher Education.

These qualifications and the reputation of the quality of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum enable those students who choose, to go on to further or higher education.

How do children from mainstream schools adapt to the Steiner Waldorf education (and vice versa)?

Our experience is that children of all ages adapt very well moving either into or out of Steiner Waldorf education. We invariably receive very positive comments from schools, colleges and universities about our former students, who are regarded as socially competent and readily able to assimilate new information and structures.

Strong emphasis is placed on social skills and the fact that the curriculum is so well adapted to the child's developmental stage means those entering the school from mainstream schools generally adapt healthily and quickly to their new environment.

If the school does not test its students, how can parents know that the appropriate standards are being met?

We do not have a culture of continuous type testing in the classroom and children at Michael Hall do not take SATs. Such testing encourages children to value their achievements in terms of test results only. Our aim is for children to enjoy a genuine educational experience. We do assess children in basic numeracy and literacy through regular class screening as well as individual assessment. Assessments, from Class 4, use standardised tests that have nationally recognised criteria. As pupils move through the school, their progress is monitored and reported to parents through individual meetings and in their child's annual report.

The class teacher who stays with the class for 8 years builds a detailed picture of each child - their school and family life - and is ideally placed to assess how that child is progressing. Parents are also encouraged to speak directly with teachers if they have concerns about their child's progress.

Michael Hall School Classes and their state/independent equivalents:

MICHAEL HALL	AGE	STATE	INDEPENDENT
Early Years			
Parent & Child Group	0 - 2 ½	Playgroups, nurseries	Playgroup / Nursery
Kindergarten	Rising 3 - 5	Primary (Reception)	Pre-preparatory
	5 - 6	Year 1 (Infants)	
Lower School			
Class 1	6 - 7	Year 2	
Class 2	7 - 8	Year 3 (Infants)	Preparatory
Class 3	8 - 9	Year 4	
Class 4	9 - 10	Year 5	
Class 5	10 - 11	Year 6	Girls: Common Entrance exam
Class 6	11 - 12	Year 7 (Secondary)	
Class 7	12 - 13	Year 8	Boys & co-ed Common Entrance exam
Class 8	13 - 14	Year 9	
Upper School			
Class 9	14 - 15	Year 10	
Class 10	15 - 16	Year 11 GCSE	GCSE
Class 11	16 - 17	Year 12	
Class 12	17 - 18	Year 13 A Level	A Level

Times of the School Day

All classes start at 08.10 but finish at different times as shown in the chart below:

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Kindergarten	12:30	12:30	12:30	12:30	12:30
Class 1	12.15	15.15*	12:15	15.15	12:15
Class 2	15:15	15:15	15:15	12:15	15:15
Class 3	15:15	15:15	15:15	12:15**	15:15
Class 4	15:15	15:15	15:15	15:15	15:15
Classes 5 - 8	15:15	15:15	15:15	15:15	15:15
Classes 9 - 12	16:00	16:00	16:00	16:00	16:00

= Short days

= Long days

* = from summer term

** = short day or optional afternoon club to 15.15

Afternoon Club & Activities

Afternoon Club

Available to: Kindergarten from 12:30 to 15:00
Classes 1 - 3 from 12:15 to 15:15

Homework Club

Available to: Siblings of Upper School pupils and those using the School Bus service from 15:15 to 16:00.

Details of Music and Sports Clubs are available from Reception or can be viewed on our website under 'Clubs'.

Reception opening hours
08:00 - 17.00

Michael Hall

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