

Michael Hall School

Michael Hall School, Kidbrooke Mansion, Kidbrooke Park, FOREST ROW, East Sussex, RH18 5JA

Inspection dates

29/09/2015 to 01/10/2015

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good **2**

The quality of care and support

Good 2

How well children and young people are protected

Good 2

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good 2

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is good because

- Boarders have their individual needs met to a very good standard. They enjoy their time at the school and the boarding experience. The boarding management is an excellent feature of the school.
- Boarders experience a school environment that is vibrant and culturally diverse. Tolerance, respect and individuality is promoted.
- The leadership and management team reflects the school's commitment to developing the school and in meeting changes in legislation; such as the national minimum standards for boarding schools, while maintaining its long standing ethos of Steiner Waldorf.
- Robust systems actively promote boarders' safety. Boarders feel safe from harm at the school and when out in the community. They form trusting relationships with their boarding families. They have a range of adults they can turn to for support at any time.
- Staff are committed to the boarder's welfare. Careful consideration is given to the emotional well-being of boarders. Bespoke arrangements ensure particular needs are extremely well cared for. Boarding parents are consistently positive about the support they receive from the boarding manager.
- Boarders are happy. They enjoy the boarding experience. They make friends. They mature and embrace the Steiner Waldorf values. Their individuality is celebrated.

- Boarding students are supported by staff to develop independence and show responsibility while fully safeguarding them.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- ensure there is consistency in the use of risk assessments.
- better organise the safeguarding records to provide a clear chronology for easier monitoring and auditing.
- ensure there are clear procedures in place for monitoring visitors if the fire alarm is activated.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with three hours' notice. Inspection activities included; visiting boarding families in the community and on the school site; formal and informal discussions with boarding students, sharing a meal with boarding students. In addition, discussions with the college chair, resource manager, boarding administrator, members of the safeguarding team and other members of the senior management team. A wide range of documentation concerning boarding was scrutinised. There were no responses on 'Parent View' to consider.

Inspection team

Liz Driver

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Michael Hall School was founded in 1925 as the first English based Steiner Waldorf school. It offers education to children from the ages of three to 18 years of age. The school occupies Kidbrooke Park, a large site of over 60 acres. At the time of the inspection, there were 465 pupils on role of whom 10 were boarders. Eight of the boarders live with families in the local community. Two boarders live with a family on site. The vast majority of boarders have English as a second language.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Boarding students make very good educational and social progress at this school. They experience a rich and varied educational experience with an enjoyable boarding experience.

Boarding students develop their personal and social skills which supports their transition to adult life with confidence and maturity. Boarders embrace the values of school which are interwoven into the culture of the school. They develop skills such as respect, making friends, sharing, and appreciating each other. The boarding experience nurtures and supports their own interests and talents. This leads to growing self-esteem and confidence. Boarding students enjoy each other's company and there is a strong sense of friendship between them.

Equality and diversity is a real strength. A comprehensive social, moral, spiritual and cultural schedule is set up at the start of the academic year. Students celebrate their own heritage and learn about others beliefs. There is an all-encompassing, inclusive culture regardless of gender, age or background.

Behaviour is exemplary. Students represent themselves and the school tremendously well. They live up to the high expectations embedded in the culture. Staff treat students as young adults. An example is students taking responsibility for organising a weekend activity; a trip to London. They are effectively safeguarded, through robust risk assessments while developing independence.

Students engage with the wider community. They help with events such as the BridgingAges project where students interview elderly people in the community, learning about local history and then they produce biographies for them to keep. They show a sense of responsibility and empathy for others. They raise money for local and international charities.

Leaders and managers are effective at identifying and tackling weaknesses and securing improvement of the boarding provision. They understand the students' needs and ensure they receive the best boarding experience possible.

The safety of students is a priority. There are robust and effective arrangements for safeguarding and students know how to keep themselves safe.

The boarding provision works in partnership with other areas of the school, parents and carers and external agencies to support students. There is regular communication and positive feedback from students, parents and professionals about the boarding provision.

The quality of care and support

Good

The quality of the boarding provision is good, with some outstanding aspects. Boarders who are mainly overseas students, receive a nurturing, sensitive and individualised experience. Boarding students are treated with dignity and respect with care that is sensitive and responsive to their age, gender, language and ethnicity.

The organisation and management of boarding is excellent, with the boarding administrator taking the leading role in overseeing the individual and group boarding experiences. She has developed very good relationships with boarders, their boarding families and their own families, many of whom live overseas. This high standard of practice is supported by good policies and information.

Induction procedures are well organised with much preparation to ensure boarders experience a smooth transition to the school. Many boarders come from other Steiner schools in Europe and stay for one or two terms to gain experience of the English language and culture. They are well informed of the Steiner school ethos of receiving an education that addressed the whole human being, body, soul and spirit at every stage of their development. The induction into boarding life reflects the individual needs of each boarder. The management oversight of induction is excellent with very good feedback from the boarders and boarding families alike.

The school and boarding families cater for boarders dietary needs well. The catering manager ensures any specific dietary needs, for example, due to religion or health, are fully met. The menu is quite unique, it focuses on seasonal produce. Boarders receive a healthy diet and have good knowledge themselves of eating healthy foods and their benefits.

Accommodation provided in individual homes, on site and in the local community is of a generally good standard. Regular, robust checks are carried out on each home, and expectations of high health and safety standards in each home ensures boarders are safe.

Boarding students engage in the local and wider community. They can join in organised trips and are encouraged to arrange activities themselves. Close monitoring of any activity they organise ensures their safety at all times. Activities include, sailing, debating club, visiting London and theatre trips. The location of the schools enables boarding students to participate in the outdoor life the surrounding forest provides.

Boarding students are encouraged to contact their parents/carers regularly and are offered privacy to do this. There is regular contact between staff and parents/carers.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Boarding students are very safe at this school. Designated safeguarding leads are suitably trained. They are familiar with the most recently published guidance, including the Prevent agenda, sexual exploitation and cyber bullying. All staff, including a

designated college council member are concerned with safeguarding students. They are trained in safeguarding procedures. The safeguarding lead maintain good links with external safeguarding agencies and work in partnership with them. They consult with the Local Children Safeguarding Board and the Local Authority Designated Officer who give advice and guidance in the event of any concern or allegations. Detailed records are kept although they are not as well organised as they could be. Improved organisation will enable easier auditing and monitoring.

Risk assessments guide staff about individual risks, and how to lessen risks. The school currently has an array of risk assessment pro-forma that are not consistently applied. Risk assessments are completed for all activities, accommodation and the environment, but their inconsistent use does not assist monitoring and auditing.

There is a very good approach to e-safety. A dedicated member of staff takes the lead on this. He has written a very detailed policy which he delivers to staff, boarding students and parents. In addition, external consultants have visited the school to deliver e-safety training.

Bullying is not an issue. Boarding students expressed no concerns around bullying, teasing or being left out. Observation showed just how thoughtful students are for each other, encouraging less confident peers to engage in activities, for example. Boarding families also include students in their family activities and encourage them to socialise with their friends out of school.

Behaviours are exemplary. No physical interventions take place. Students are very respectful of each other and the staff. A robust policy is in place should a student go missing. There have been no incidents since the last inspection.

All necessary health and safety certificates are in place. There are regular fire drills so boarding students know what to do in the event of a fire. Current evacuation procedures do not fully cater for the monitoring of visitors in such an event. There is no clear line of accountability with regard to the monitoring of visitors if a fire occurred. Visitors are however, expected to sign in on their arrival.

The recruitment process ensures all checks are completed so all adults, including boarding families are safe to have contact with the students. Checks are also carried out for boarding family children over the age of 16 years.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The boarding provision is effectively and efficiently managed. There is passion and enthusiasm for boarding which permeates across the boarding staff. Senior leaders lead by example, demonstrating a respect for others that underpins the school's ethos and culture of boarding. There are good relationships between the boarding staff, families and school, putting the boarding students at the centre of practice. The school truly implements the ethos of Steiner Waldorf.

The impact of a recent education inspection has resulted in changes in the leadership and management of the school, especially around the lines of accountability and responsibilities. The council is undergoing changes that will see new council members in place. Members will take on individual responsibilities; for example a designated safeguarding council member, already in situ. The full impact of the changes are yet to be fully embedded, although appear to be having a positive impact. The senior management team report to the College of Teachers and Council. The pastoral team consists of a wide range of staff including the boarding administrator and first aid lead. All senior teams work and liaise closely, so the whole school can move forward and continue with its development programme.

The culture of the school and boarding provision is characterised by high expectations and aspirations for all students. Leaders and managers ensure that all students make good academic progress and personal progress, are safe and achieve their goals. During difficult times students receive high levels of support, sensitively delivered.

The ethos and objectives of the school are clearly available on the school's web site for parents, students and external professionals to access. In practice it effectively delivers all aspects of the Steiner Waldorf ideals.

Leaders and managers actively monitor the quality of care. The school acknowledges this is an area that is, and continues to be developed. The monitoring will change as a result of the change in structure; specifically the change to council members. There is a clear development plan that identifies developments in the boarding provision. For example to ensure training for boarding families continues to be up to date.

Care, kindness and acceptance are at the heart of the principles of the school. These are applied very well in day-to-day living. Equality and diversity are particular strengths.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	114625
Social care unique reference number	SC050351
DfE registration number	

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Boarding School
Number of boarders on roll	10
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	14 to19
Headteacher	Josephine Reeves
Date of previous boarding inspection	12-14 November 2012
Telephone number	01342 822275
Email address	Smt@michaelhall.co.uk

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