

Michael Hall School

Michael Hall School Ltd

Kidbrooke Mansion, Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row, East Sussex RH18 5JA

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Michael Hall School is a Waldorf school offering education from birth to 18 years. At the time of the inspection there were 464 pupils on roll, of whom seven were boarding students with English as a second language. Boarding students live with families in the local community or with families on the school site.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 February 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 29 September 2015

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is good because:

- Leaders and managers are ambitious to drive forward improvements and raise standards while strengthening and preserving the ethos of the school.
- The boarding provision is effectively managed and monitored to ensure that boarding students have a positive experience.
- Safeguarding systems are strong, and safeguarding students has the highest priority. Students are educated in how to keep themselves safe. They develop an awareness and understanding of the dangers they may face.
- Boarding students' welfare needs are identified and supported appropriately.
- Boarding students are positive about their boarding experience. They receive high-quality, individualised support which meets their specific needs.

The boarding school's areas for development:

- Boarding families are not trained in first aid.
- There is no clear policy and procedure to guide boarding families when a boarding student is absent from their care without permission.
- Individual risk assessments do not always have sufficient detail to guide staff when students are displaying concerning behaviour.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that boarding families undertake first aid training.
- Ensure that there is a clear policy and procedure to guide boarding families in the event of a boarding student being missing or absent without permission. The policy should take account of the local protocols and the arrangements for return interviews.
- Ensure that individual risk assessments for students have sufficient detail to guide staff and boarding families to support students who are displaying concerning behaviour.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Boarding students receive high-quality, individualised support from boarding families who know them very well. Boarding students, who are mainly from overseas, are positive about their experience. They develop trusting relationships with their boarding families and are comfortable in talking to them and school staff about any worries or concerns that they may have. Boarding families provide them with a welcoming, safe, homely environment where their needs are met.

Boarding families support boarding students to develop their personal, social and independence skills. Boarding students' health and well-being are monitored closely. Staff and boarding families communicate effectively with boarding students' parents to promote their well-being.

Boarding students are encouraged to participate in social activities, engage in the wider community and make friends. Boarding families help boarding students to plan and organise their activities so that their whereabouts are known, with their safety always in mind.

Educationally, boarding students benefit from a vibrant school experience and the immersive experience of living with a family in the local community. Boarding students make good progress and significantly improve their English language skills.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The designated safeguarding lead has implemented robust safeguarding systems and is committed to the continued improvement of systems to safeguard boarding students and promote their welfare. Taking a whole school approach, she is embedding a culture in which safeguarding students has the highest priority. She is supported by a team of deputy designated safeguarding leads, safeguarding officers and pastoral care officers. Effective arrangements exist with external safeguarding agencies, including the local authority designated officer. There is good-quality communication and information sharing which strengthens awareness of current issues and develops best practice.

The school is proactive in making sure that only those assessed as suitable to work with students are employed. Rigorous recruitment processes are audited by the safeguarding trustee, which provides an additional layer of monitoring and scrutiny that assists in the safeguarding and protection of students. The recruitment of host families is as rigorous as the recruitment of school staff.

Boarding students' welfare needs are identified and supported appropriately. There are clear links between academic staff, pastoral staff and boarding families. Risk assessments relating to students' specific welfare needs ensure that staff and

boarding families implement appropriate strategies, support and additional protection to help keep students safe. However, risk assessments do not always have sufficient detail to guide staff when students are displaying concerning behaviour.

There have been no recent recorded incidents of boarding students being missing. There is a clear procedure to guide staff when students are missing from school, but greater clarity is required in relation to the procedure when students are missing or absent without permission from their boarding placement. Also, the policy relating to students being missing does not take into account the local missing protocol or the arrangements for return interviews.

The newly appointed staff member with responsibility for behaviour management demonstrates a clear understanding of what is required to continue to drive improvements in managing students' behaviour. Following a review of the training undertaken by staff, a new training model is being implemented with an increased focus on consistency of practice and rewarding positive behaviour. The behaviour of students living with boarding families is excellent.

Through the curriculum, students are educated in how to keep themselves safe. They are helped to develop an awareness and understanding of dangers they may face, particularly in relation to exploitation, cyber bullying and being radicalised. The school is proactive in monitoring internet use and promoting e-safety. Host families, too, are vigilant in relation to e-safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Senior leaders and the trustees are ambitious to drive forward improvements and to raise standards, while strengthening and preserving the ethos of the school. Senior leaders and managers have a clear vision to continue the trajectory of change to embed improvements in the culture.

The boarding coordinator is proactive in their day-to-day management and oversight of the boarding provision, which is led effectively by the director of operations. Half-termly reports provide senior leaders with relevant and appropriate information to monitor the experience of boarders and ensure that they are receiving the necessary support.

The boarding coordinator closely reviews boarders' experience, through weekly meetings with the boarders who are attending the school for a short time and termly meetings with those boarders who are pursuing longer-term courses. Boarders' comments, requests and complaints are responded to appropriately.

Leaders and managers are fully aware of the areas of strength and the areas where development is required in the boarding provision. A current boarding improvement plan details the action necessary to implement best practice and improve outcomes for boarders.

Host boarding families are well supported and undertake training to ensure that they have the necessary level of awareness of safeguarding issues to protect boarders. However, they have not received training in first aid.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC050351

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Davina Skinner, Director of Operations

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

Jan Hunnam: social care inspector

Lolly Rascagneres: social care inspector



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