



Michael House School

Independent School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

DfES Registration Number 830/6010
Unique Reference Number 113014
Inspection number 298649
Inspection dates 22-23 February 2007
Reporting inspector Mrs Cecile Corfield AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Age group 3-16	Published 16 March 2007	Reference no. 298649
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Michael House School is situated in Shipley in Derbyshire. The school opened in 1934 and its curricular provision and teaching are based on Steiner philosophy and holistic views on child development. The school was last inspected in May 2003. There are 150 pupils on roll aged from 3 to 16 years. The school is non-selective and non-denominational. Twenty-nine pupils are on the register of special education needs, but no pupil has a statement of special educational need. The school aims *'to engage and nourish each child's innate curiosity and love of learning by offering a balance of academic, artistic and practical activities.'*

Evaluation of the school

Michael House School provides pupils with a satisfactory, well-rounded education firmly based on the Steiner curriculum. The school's ethos is caring and positive, and the quality of care is satisfactory. The quality of the curriculum and teaching is satisfactory with some good features. This enables pupils to make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. There is good provision for those pupils who need extra support. Pupils enjoy school and are usually enthusiastic about their work and play. Pupils' behaviour is good overall and they respond well in most lessons. They develop good relationships with their teachers and each other. The school meets most, but not all, of the regulations. Since the last inspection, the school has improved some of its curricular provision and planning.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The prospectus sets out clearly the school's values and aims for its curriculum. The Kindergarten and school follow closely the Steiner curricular guidelines which are designed to dovetail with each pupil's stage of development. In the Kindergarten, as a result of carefully planned activities, the pupils make good progress and develop appropriate language and mathematical concepts, creative and physical skills, and good knowledge and understanding of the seasons and the natural world. In the lower and upper schools, pupils have 'main lessons' each morning which include a wide range of subjects. Most 'main lessons' contain aspects of mathematics and English. German is taught from Class 1, and French from Class 5. Although

the school expects early receipt of ten computers on order, pupils have little opportunity to develop information and communication technology skills. The quality of curricular planning is variable but is satisfactory overall. There is no whole school format for long- and medium-term planning and as a result some subjects, such as upper school English and lower school literacy and numeracy, are planned more effectively than others. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties has improved from the last inspection and is now good. Pupils receive regular specialist support. Some subjects are followed to GCSE, including double award science. However, the number of subjects taken by pupils is limited in range. There is insufficient careers education and guidance for pupils of secondary school age.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Pupils make satisfactory progress within the Steiner stages of development. In the best *'main lessons'*, teaching ensures that good learning links are made between knowledge and understanding in one subject in order to improve learning in another. In Class 5, for example, outstanding work on the geography of Britain considered location and settlement alongside learning about the historical events which influenced that development. In an art lesson for Class 9 pupils, the teacher's effective planning and use of carefully prepared resources, enabled the pupils to make very good gains in their learning. In the majority of lessons, teaching is satisfactory. Lesson planning varies from identifying learning with clear aims and objectives to brief notes on what will be done in the lesson. Sometimes, the pace of lessons is dictated by the time the pupils spend on tasks, with the more competent pupils waiting for those who work more slowly. Work is not always matched to the wide range of ability found in each class. However, teachers have good subject knowledge and experience. They are conscientious and strive to do their best for their pupils.

Assessment procedures have improved and are now satisfactory. Assessments are undertaken annually in each year group to check on pupils' progress and screening is undertaken biannually from Class 2. Insightful child studies and class studies are kept on all aspects of individual pupils' progress. Pupils' progress is discussed in detail at teachers' weekly meetings and evening reviews.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The school places great emphasis on the spiritual development of its pupils, through its emphasis on the beauty of the seasons, the natural world and the pupils' inner self. The Waldorf approach to education, by engaging the pupils in *'Head, Heart and Hands,'* promotes their understanding of the world around them and their place in it. Pupils study energy conservation and look at

ways the school can save energy. In the lower school, pupils study shopping, paying bills and profit and loss. The school's positive ethos makes an important contribution to pupils' moral and social development. Pupils gain self-confidence by giving public performances for parents. They contribute to the wider community by fundraising and carol singing. Behaviour throughout the school is generally good, but some lower school pupils have not yet learned self-discipline. Most pupils attend very regularly, are eager to come to school and are enthusiastic about their work. They learn about public institutions in history and religion lessons only on an occasional basis, and the school recognises the need to develop citizenship further. An appreciation of the pupils' own culture is promoted effectively and understanding and respect for other cultures is provided satisfactorily through the Steiner curriculum.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school has all but one of the policies and procedures required to minimise health and safety risks to pupils. The policy for child protection is out of date. However, the newly nominated person responsible for child protection is to have training in March when the policy and procedures will be updated. She will, in turn, provide training for the rest of the staff. The buildings, including all classrooms, have been checked for any risks. Recent recommendations from the Fire Officer have been attended to in part, but have not yet been completed with the urgency required, for example to include removing the clutter from the warehouse, where it constitutes a fire hazard.

The behaviour and anti-bullying policies are reinforced successfully through assemblies and religious studies. As a result, the majority of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their work are good. The behaviour policy specifies the range of rewards for good work and effort, and details sanctions for unacceptable behaviour.

The school encourages healthy habits in pupils, for example in relation to lunches, personal hygiene and physical exercise. Through its pupils' welfare policy, clear rules and levels of supervision, it ensures that pupils are aware of how to stay safe and well.

The admission and attendance registers conform to regulations. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has prepared a statement indicating how it can improve access to the physical environment.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Most administrators, teachers and assistants have been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau. The most recently appointed members of staff are currently having checks. Staffing and recruitment procedures do not comply

with latest regulations, however, as they do not show securely that individuals' identities, certificates and professional qualifications are checked and recorded.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are fit for purpose. The school has sold some land and this has released funds for improvements to the school. These include new washroom facilities for boys and girls in the upper school and for the staff. Facilities for the lower school are to be improved when further funding becomes available. Following refurbishments in 2006, there is now specialist provision for arts and crafts. The Kindergarten moved recently to attractive cottage accommodation with access to its own garden. The grounds offer good facilities for pupils of all ages to experience gardening. The climbing frame in the muddy adventure playground presents a dangerous hazard to pupils as it has no soft surface materials beneath the equipment.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a satisfactory range of information in its prospectus and handbook for new parents and carers. It meets all but one of the regulations. Although parents are informed that they can request to see the complaints policy, they are not informed of the number of formal complaints received by the school in the previous school year. Letters to parents are informative about a wide range of school matters. Most parents noted in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire that they feel well informed about their children's progress. However, a significant proportion of parents feel that the school is not well managed: for example, they express frustration that decisions take a long time to be made and even longer time to be implemented. The inspectors agree with this view.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's policy and procedures for handling complaints meet the regulations in full.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- provide appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1(2)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- as a matter of urgency, carry out all recommendations made by the Fire Officer in the January 2007 report (paragraph 3(5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, carry out appropriate checks to confirm their identity, qualifications and professional references (paragraph 4(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- make appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for the pupils to play safely (paragraph 5(t)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school	Michael House School		
DfES number	830/6010		
Unique reference number	113014		
Type of school	Steiner school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1934		
Age range of pupils	3-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 52	Girls: 51	Total: 103
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 29	Girls: 18	Total: 47
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,200-£4,290		
Address of school	The Field Shipley Heanor Derbyshire DE75 7JH		
Telephone number	01773 718050		
Fax number	01773 711784		
Email address	admin@michaelhouseschool.com		
Headteacher	College of Teachers		
Proprietor	Michael House Association Limited		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Cecile Corfield AI		
Dates of inspection	22-23 February 2007		