

The St Michael Steiner School

Park Road, Hanworth Park, London TW13 6PN

Inspection dates

26 to 28 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills in a wide range of subjects.
- The information gained by leaders from checking the school's work is not used effectively to improve pupils' achievement.
- Leaders' and governors' plans for improvement do not focus sharply enough on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers' questioning does not probe pupils' understanding sufficiently well.
- Assessment information is not used well enough to meet the learning needs of the most able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- In the early years, there are gaps in children's assessment information; it is based on a limited range of evidence.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- From the actions already taken, leaders and governors have shown that the school has good capacity to improve.
- Parents, staff and pupils are highly supportive of the school, and they value the provision.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in the upper school.
- Pupils behave well in school and in the playground. They are polite and well mannered.
- A strong culture of safeguarding permeates all aspects of school life and ensures that pupils are kept safe.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Most pupils are thoughtful and reflective.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all teachers:
 - deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding across the curriculum
 - use skilful questioning to probe pupils' understanding of what is being learned
 - use assessment information skilfully to match learning tasks more precisely to pupils' learning needs, especially for the most able pupils and those with SEND.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that the curriculum provides pupils with planned opportunities to learn in greater depth
 - using information gained from monitoring activities more effectively to raise pupils' achievement
 - ensuring that plans for improvement are clear about how actions will develop and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Ensure that assessment information in the early years is based on a good range of evidence and checked by leaders for its quality and accuracy.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Although the curriculum is broad, pupils do not have enough opportunity to study subjects in greater depth, including mathematics and English. For example, the teaching of reasoning skills is not embedded in the mathematics curriculum. The same is true for investigative skills in history and science. This is the case in the lower and middle sections of the school. Consequently, many pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Monitoring activities provide leaders with a wealth of information about teaching and learning. However, leaders do not use this information skilfully enough to bring about improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Despite the improvements that have been made across the school, leaders have not effectively tackled the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. This limits the rate of improvement.
- The school's improvement plan has identified the need to improve the quality and impact of careers education and guidance. However, the plan lacks a clear focus on improving teaching and pupils' achievement, based on accurate and detailed self-evaluation.
- Pupils study a wide range of subjects, including languages, music, eurhythmy and agriculture. They participate in many activities that support their good understanding of British values. For example, during the inspection, Class 10 pupils were working collaboratively on their building project, cladding a portacabin using a range of building materials. The curriculum successfully develops a strong sense of community and service in all pupils.
- There are wide-ranging opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, religious education, history and art promote good spiritual and cultural understanding. Pupils' good behaviour throughout the school reflects their strong moral and social development.
- Leaders have systems in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified, and that their learning is supported. The expertise of external specialists is used to inform plans and targets for this group of pupils. Teaching assistants are deployed to ensure that pupils learn effectively, alongside their peers. However, as is the case for other pupils in the school, the quality of teaching for pupils with SEND is variable.
- Staff morale is high. Leaders make sure that staff are aware of the school's key priorities. There are regular opportunities to take part in professional development. However, with the exception of the upper school, these opportunities have not led to strong teaching.

Governance

- Governors are supportive of staff and seek opportunities to ensure they have the right guidance and help. The strongest impact of governors' work has been in the area of safeguarding. Governors have been instrumental in establishing systems to safeguard pupils.

- Governors hold the college of teachers to account for the school's performance. However, there is little mention of the quality of teaching or pupils' outcomes in the school improvement plan. This limits the effectiveness of governors' work.
- Governors are linked to key areas of the school. This is so they can provide focused challenge to the college of teachers. As a result, governors are starting to check that leaders' actions to improve the school have impact.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All systems for safeguarding are fit for purpose, and the vetting checks on staff are complete. Staff store safeguarding records securely and ensure that these are written in sufficient detail. Staff are well trained in the most up-to-date safeguarding practice, and leaders keep records of this training.
- Leaders are knowledgeable and vigilant about safeguarding matters. The school's safeguarding team and staff are determined to make sure children are kept safe from harm. Staff and pupils know what to do should they have any concern relating to safeguarding matters. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.
- The curriculum for safeguarding is well developed and effective. Across all year groups, pupils learn about personal safety, healthy relationships and personal health. Where pupils have specific vulnerabilities, teachers support them well and make sure that help is tailored to their needs. Over time, the school's focus on building resilience has had a positive effect on pupils' well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work show that, in too many lessons, pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Learning tasks keep pupils busy, but are often too easy. As a result, pupils do not learn in enough depth across a wide range of subjects.
- Not all teachers are skilful at planning learning tasks to support and challenge the most able pupils and those with SEND. Quite often, teaching is not adapted well enough to meet the learning needs of these pupils. Consequently, over time, the progress these pupils make is variable.
- When questioning is used skilfully, for example in the upper school, pupils are keen to answer in detail to deepen their learning. However, too much questioning is superficial. It does not check how much pupils are learning or how well they understand what they read. As a result, pupils do not develop a deep understanding of what they are learning.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills. Pupils are enthused by their topics in wider curriculum subjects. This learning is often used as a focus for their writing, and this motivates pupils to write at length. Teachers' modelling and support for writing helps pupils learn how to construct sentences, organise text and improve their handwriting.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. For example, pupils are increasingly asked to perform more challenging calculations. Consequently, pupils now make stronger progress.

However, younger pupils have too few opportunities to solve problems and develop their reasoning skills.

- Reading is taught well in the lower school. Teachers are knowledgeable and skilled in developing pupils' early reading skills. Pupils have access to a range of age-appropriate texts and enjoy engaging with them. As a result, pupils make good gains in reading soon after they leave the Kindergarten.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the upper school are strong. Pupils are challenged to think more deeply by drawing on their previous learning and applying it to new contexts. This was seen, for example, in the study of medieval literature and philosophy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' welfare is promoted effectively. A skilled pastoral team provides essential support for pupils. This fosters their emotional and social development well.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Pupils said that they value their teachers and are proud to be a part of their school. Leaders place a heavy emphasis on nurturing pupils' emotional well-being.
- Pupils know about the different forms that bullying can take. They are clear that incidents of bullying and derogatory language are very rare. This is further evidenced by leaders' records relating to behaviour.
- In lessons and assemblies, pupils learn how to stay safe and keep safe. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet and social media.
- Pupils show respect for the different types of family life represented in modern Britain. They talk sensitively about the challenges people from different backgrounds might face.
- Parents and staff are confident that children are safe and well looked after in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils know what is expected of them. They follow the school rules and enjoy the rewards they receive for good behaviour.
- Pupils enjoy playing with their friends at playtimes and lunchtimes. They relish opportunities to take part in a range of activities, which helps them keep fit and gives them opportunities to socialise with friends.
- No low-level disruption was observed in lessons or highlighted by pupils during the inspection. The school's evidence about behaviour confirms that this is typical. In addition, the school's records show that there have been no exclusions in recent years.
- Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. Attendance is increasing. It is now in line with the national average. This is because the importance of attending school is communicated to pupils and parents.

- All staff and most parents said that behaviour is good in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Variations in the quality of teaching, over time, have led to variable rates of progress for pupils in the lower and middle schools. Pupils are not routinely challenged by the work set for them. Consequently, they do not make strong progress, and outcomes for pupils require improvement.
- Pupils' learning in subjects that make up the wider curriculum is often patchy. This is because they do not have the chance to study these subjects in enough depth. Important knowledge and skills associated with a subject are not taught in greater depth. This limits the amount of progress that individual pupils make. This includes the most able pupils, and those with SEND.
- Pupils' work shows that they develop a strong understanding of calculation in mathematics. However, they do not have enough opportunities to practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills.
- Most pupils write beautifully and with great care. They use a variety of sentence structures and phrases to add interest and mood to their writing. This includes using similes and other technical devices.
- Soon after they enter the lower school, pupils begin to apply their knowledge of phonics to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils enjoy reading, and read with fluency and comprehension, and at the appropriate standard for their age and ability. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said they enjoy reading and are developing a growing list of favourite authors.
- Teachers use examples from literature to enthuse and inspire pupils in the upper school. These pupils make good progress and achieve well. For example, in 2018, the majority of pupils in Class 12 achieved a distinction in the Certificate of Steiner Education (CSE) qualification. Most pupils went on to higher education, including some who gained admission to read an academic subject at a Russell Group university.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Scrutiny of children's assessment information shows that there are too many gaps in what children know and can do. This means that staff's evaluations of the progress children make are not reliable. This is because they are based on limited information. As a result, leaders are not able to plan actions for improvement based on reliable and accurate information.
- The most able children, and those who are older, are not challenged. Appropriate provision for these children is not systematically planned for in the early years curriculum. As a result, the progress these children make requires improvement.
- Children's speaking and listening skills are well developed by adults, who draw on children's home languages, such as Spanish or Arabic, to support their understanding. Staff engage children in conversations and model the correct use of language. Staff also encourage children to use good manners and insist that children say 'please' and 'thank

you', when appropriate. This creates a positive learning environment where children socialise well with one another.

- Children behave well and cooperate effectively in their learning. This is because adults have high expectations of their conduct and have put in place clear routines for children to follow. Where activities are matched appropriately to children's needs, they are able to demonstrate sustained concentration. However, this is not routinely the case.
- In outdoor learning, activities often have a purpose, which enables children to develop their speaking and listening skills. For example, during the inspection, children enjoyed talking and working together to make Easter baskets. Likewise, indoor activities enable children to develop their fine motor skills, for instance when making bracelets for Mother's Day.
- Parents have opportunities to share information with the school about their child's development. Their relationships with adults in the setting are strong. Parents receive useful information before their children start at the school, and this supports children to settle in well.
- Children are well cared for in the early years, and welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	138771
DfE registration number	313/6002
Inspection number	10094400

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 category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The St Michael Steiner School Limited
Chair	Brian Hipkin
Headteacher (current chair of the college of teachers)	Peter Brewin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,045 – £11,025
Telephone number	020 8893 1299
Website	www.stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk
Email address	info@stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The St Michael Steiner School is an independent co-educational day school registered for pupils aged between three and 18 years.
- The school moved to its present site in 2012. It occupies a listed building in its own grounds on the edge of Hanworth Park, in Hounslow.
- The Kindergarten classes include 28 children aged from rising three to six plus. Those up to age of five follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, with agreed

exemptions from the Department for Education. The early years provision is exempt from teaching reading, writing and some aspects of number.

- Admission to the school is non-selective. Classes one to eight comprise the lower and middle school, and classes nine to 12 comprise the upper school.
- The school has identified 13 pupils with SEND, including a few pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not have a headteacher. Around half of the school's staff are members of the college of teachers, who share responsibility for managing different aspects of the school's work. The college is held to account by a group of six trustees, who also comprise the school's governing body. The St Michael Steiner School Limited company is the proprietorial body of the school.
- The school follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Steiner's philosophy and his views on child development and psychology underpin the school's educational approach.
- No pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with a range of staff who are members of the college of teachers, including the current chair of the college.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all lessons, in a range of subjects. Several sessions were observed jointly with staff from the college of teachers. Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in several subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of trustees, who is also the director of The St Michael Steiner School Limited company. Inspectors also held meetings with two groups of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the 83 responses from parents to the Ofsted questionnaire. They also took account of the 21 responses received from staff, and 56 responses to the pupils' survey.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including: leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness; analysis of the school's information about pupils' progress; information relating to the attendance and behaviour of pupils; safeguarding and child protection records; a wide range of school policies; and the school development plan.

Inspection team

Nasim Butt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alison Moore

Ofsted Inspector

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