

School inspection report

5 to 7 March 2024

The St Michael Steiner School

Park Road

Hanworth Park

London

TW13 6PN

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	5
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS.....	5
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	7
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	9
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.....	10
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	11
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	12
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. There is no headteacher as such but instead the formal leadership structure consists of the teachers and administrative staff forming a group known as 'the College', which takes collective responsibility for running the school. The trustees ensure that the College carries out its responsibilities for ensuring the school meets the Standards.
2. In the early years, children enjoy a highly supportive environment that promotes independence and a creative approach to their learning, whether inside the classrooms or in the outdoor spaces all around them. Children behave well and engage with each other enthusiastically and positively, in a variety of different situations.
3. The curriculum is highly flexible, centred on the teachers' observation of the pupils which informs a varied programme of activities that encompasses practical skills, imagination and thinking so that pupils develop a broad range of skills and knowledge. Teachers develop a deep understanding of the strengths and needs of their pupils over the years that they work with them.
4. The teaching curriculum follows the Steiner philosophy in terms of approaching learning in what leaders see as a holistic way, based on their understanding of child development, seeking to find connections across the subject boundaries. Pupils do not take formal examinations but work towards a recognised qualification based on continuous assessment. Over the last three years, all leavers have achieved the Level 3 qualification required for university entrance, with over two thirds awarded distinctions.
5. Pupils are self-motivated and independent in their thinking, enjoying the stimulating use of movement between the indoor and outdoor areas. Continuous feedback from teachers helps the pupils to understand their progress. Staff are clearly committed to the school's approach to teaching and learning, as well as demonstrating a depth of knowledge. Consequently, pupils mostly respond positively to their work and make steady progress. Lessons for the most part provide effective challenge for pupils, but this is not always the case and at times individuals pupils with higher prior attainment are not engaged in their work, so their progress is less consistent.
6. The nature of the teaching approach, including when appropriate its emphasis on repetition, speech and singing, helps in supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are also two SEND specialists who come into the school on a part-time basis and provide further support and information to the teachers. This works well with the younger years, but the expertise of the specialists is used less effectively in the high school, so that individual needs are not always addressed fully.
7. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is positive and the majority of pupils display a mature level of self-discipline in the classroom. This reflects the emphasis placed by staff, on the code of conduct and the expectations they have of behaviour.
8. There is a clear level of mutual respect between pupils and staff throughout the school. Pupils collaborate and support each other well. The structure of the classes helps to form a close atmosphere, where members of the school community understand each other, and this supports pupils' social and academic development. Teachers ensure that pupils accept responsibility for their behaviour and respect other people, whatever their differences.

9. The school's safeguarding policy and procedures are comprehensive and effective. The safeguarding team keep themselves aware of current thinking about best practice and how this might have an effect on the way in which they safeguard the pupils in the school.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should

- ensure that teaching consistently provides pupils with higher prior attainment with appropriately challenging work that engages them well so that they continue to learn effectively and make good progress
- ensure that the support provided to pupils in the high school who have SEND meets their needs as effectively as that provided in other parts of the school.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The trustees understand their responsibilities for ensuring the school meets the needs of all its pupils and liaise closely with the teachers to achieve success. There is no single headteacher, but the teachers and administrative staff form a leadership team, known as 'the College', which elects a chair. This group takes collective responsibility for the running of the school, meeting weekly to discuss all matters pertaining to pupils' wellbeing, and wider aspects of organisation. Consequently, there is a consistent and effective focus on promoting the pupils' development and wellbeing and maintaining compliance with the Standards.
11. The trustees and the teachers work hard to promote the aims of the school, centred on the Steiner ethos. The school's website makes clear their vision and how the school is organised. The trustees review the school's policies annually and come into school to meet with teachers and pupils and to check on their appropriate implementation. There is a development plan which is the product of both the trustees and the College, which is reviewed and amended as needed so that the College and trustees can monitor the effectiveness of their provision.
12. The school has created an approach to teaching and learning with a flexible curriculum based on their understanding of child development and the principles of Steiner education. This produces a varied programme of activities that encompasses practical skills, imagination and thinking so that pupils develop a broad range of skills and knowledge.
13. This is apparent in the early years where children enjoy a highly supportive environment that promotes independence and a creative approach to their learning, whether its inside the classroom or in the outdoor spaces around it. This is enabled by effective teamwork and clear planning that reflects national early years requirements and the expectations of the Steiner framework and ethos.
14. The suitability of the school environment is monitored effectively by a trustee with the specific role of looking after health and safety. As a group, the trustees and the College seek to identify potential risks to the school, in their broadest sense, and use their different areas of expertise to mitigate these. There are systemic and effective processes in place to manage risk in line with the school's ethos, which encourages pupils to take responsibility for understanding how to ensure their own safety. Staff receive training in risk assessment and consequently produce robust risk assessments, which cover both daily life in school and trips and visits.
15. There is a clear complaints policy on the website with three defined stages, including a panel stage with one member independent of the school. All concerns are recorded fully in the school's complaints log with dates and action taken. There are relatively few complaints from parents and leaders take these seriously and address the concerns promptly, taking appropriate action when required.
16. Key information about the school is provided on the school's website with particular attention paid to the nature of the Steiner ethos and philosophy and how this guides the curriculum and the approach to teaching and learning. Teachers liaise regularly with parents through varying means, including parents' meetings, both collective and one to one, so that pupils' progress and general wellbeing can be understood. There is a formal report to parents at the end of each year.
17. The school meets its duties under the Equality Act. There is no discrimination between groups or individuals in terms of the curriculum, the wider opportunities in the school or any other aspect of

provision. A suitable accessibility policy and plan are in place which include consideration for both physical and learning needs.

18. Safeguarding is led by a member of the College with appropriate training. Leaders and staff respond to safeguarding concerns appropriately. Leaders liaise with local external agencies when required to safeguard pupils effectively.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The curriculum covers all the key areas of learning. It follows the Steiner philosophy in terms of approaching learning in what the teachers see as a holistic way, based on their understanding of child development, linking ideas together across subject boundaries. By the time pupils reach Year 11, they are working at least in line with their peers nationally.
21. Pupils do not take GCSE or A-level examinations but those in Years 11 to 13 work towards the New Zealand Certificate of Steiner Education (NZCSE). Pupils who apply to university gain their places of choice, with some choosing to take a year out before deciding on their options. Pupils make typically good progress over time.
22. Teachers in the early years demonstrate a clear understanding of the children's educational needs. Teachers provide a stimulating range of activities that involve the children in developing their practical and creative skills and confidence, as seen in the children's bread-making activity. Children select their activities confidently and work enthusiastically as individuals and in groups. Teachers make effective use of practical scenarios to ensure that children's communication and language skills are well developed. These often emerge naturally out of activities in the classroom. Children interact with their teachers and their friends all the time and learn from each other.
23. In the lower and middle school, effective planning enables pupils to apply both physical and creative effort through the different tasks. Pupils are self-motivated and independent in their thinking, enjoying the stimulating use of the outdoor environment, as seen in the building of dens and the creation of a make-believe shop. Pupils are assessed continually by staff. The weekly discussions with staff on the work they have produced helps the pupils to understand their progress and make further improvements. Pupils value class teachers' commitment and in-depth knowledge of their individual learning needs. Many lessons offer appropriate challenge for pupils with higher prior attainment. However, this is not always the case and at times some pupils do not move on with their learning because of the limited challenge of some learning tasks.
24. In the high school, teaching develops pupils' independent learning skills through the requirement to produce assignments for the NZCSE assessments. Pupils respond to this teaching positively and produce work of high quality. In discussions, pupils are able to make interesting and thoughtful links between their current studies and their prior knowledge, such as in a Year 12 lesson on *Romantic* literature, when pupils compared current work on the novel *Frankenstein* with knowledge of ancient myths.
25. Teaching staff show a passion for the philosophy behind the school's approach to teaching and learning. There is a depth of subject knowledge alongside the extensive understanding of the pupils' needs. This level of understanding helps staff provide effective individual support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The weekly reviews with pupils indicate areas that might need further attention, and these inform planning for the next week. There are also two part time specialist teachers for pupils who have SEND who provide additional support to the pupils. This works well with the younger years, but the expertise of these specialists is not used as helpfully in the high school, so that older pupils' individual needs are not always as effectively addressed as those of pupils in the rest of the school.

26. There are a few children who speak English as an additional language (EAL) within the early years, though none that require significant levels of support. Individual plans are drawn up for these children by the class teacher so that they can work successfully in the activities.
27. The design of the curriculum means that activities commonly provided outside the curriculum in other schools, such as the choir and gardening, are incorporated into the main curriculum. These develop pupils' wider skills and social interaction.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 28. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

29. The curriculum provides the pupils with an understanding of the importance of robust physical health. Effective planning of physical education (PE) lessons, and schemes of work take into account pupils' needs and developing skills. Pupils respond to teachers' guidance and advice to further their understanding of the activity at hand and develop their physical skills further, such as working out how to use space more effectively.
30. There are lessons in every year group which incorporate the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum, and which deliver a series of appropriate topics, such as online safety and racism. This curriculum also includes relationships education for all year groups and sex education from Year 7 upwards. Teachers deliver the programme through broadly themed subjects, namely 'religion' in the younger years and then 'global' issues for the seniors, blending required areas with broader topics and themes, which help to make the ideas more pertinent and relevant. Teachers start with stories in the early years, such as those with themes to do with relationships, and use these to identify the feelings the individuals might have and how to respond. Pupils are encouraged to ask questions about matters that concern them, such as discrimination and equality and they see the lessons as a safe and suitable environment to do so. Staff respond to pupils' questions openly and answer them in a manner suitable for their age. As a result, pupils develop their confidence, levels of respect for one another and a secure understanding about appropriate behaviour and attitudes towards others.
31. In the early years, children behave well and engage with each other enthusiastically and positively, in a variety of different situations, inside and outside the classroom. A relaxed, supportive atmosphere in the early years enables children to feel secure and be able to learn effectively. There is a warm relationship between children and adults which creates a sense of emotional wellbeing. The teachers help children to think about their emotions and how these affect them, through the use of stories, establishing clear expectations of their behaviour and their response to others.
32. There is a consistent focus on the promotion of pupils' emotional wellbeing and the development of the individual in the way pupils learn and develop. Pupils are encouraged to learn how to look after themselves and to be responsible. In turn, this promotes a level of self-confidence, both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils display a mature level of self-discipline in their activities.
33. Staff take action quickly, if a situation arises, and work with pupils and parents to address the problem and further develop pupils' understanding of the consequences of poor behaviour. Class teachers establish expectations on behaviour with reference to the code of conduct, to which pupils have contributed. The school's focus on individual responsibility permeates teaching and learning throughout, and consequently pupils are reminded of how they should act towards each other. The positive relationship they build with their class teacher also encourages appropriate behaviour through constant reinforcement of expectations. As a result, there are few incidents of bullying. Those that do occur are addressed swiftly and effectively.
34. Appropriate health and safety policies and procedures are followed and monitored regularly by leaders and trustees. The premises are suitably maintained and provide appropriate facilities to meet the needs of the pupils. The relevant staff maintain records and logs rigorously, making effective use of external expert advice to ensure that appropriate checks and maintenance are

carried out methodically. Leaders implement fire safety effectively, including by acting on any recommendations from external fire risk assessments, training staff appropriately and carrying out regular fire evacuation drills.

35. The provision and procedures for first aid and medical care are suitable. Parents are informed in a timely fashion, with regard to any accidents and detailed records of these are kept. An appropriate number of staff supervise pupils at breaks and lunchtimes so that pupils can feel safe but at the same time, in keeping with the Steiner ethos, learn for themselves how to play safely and sensibly. The school maintains accurate admissions and attendance registers, both as hard copies and with electronic back-up. These indicate that there are few issues with unexpected non-attendance and that any absenteeism is followed up.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 36. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

37. The curriculum and the wider ethos of the school, encourage pupils to respect each other and to accept responsibility for their behaviour, by placing an emphasis on how their actions can have an impact and the essential importance of working together as a community of equals. Pupils describe their confidence in the school's support in helping them to distinguish right from wrong, through the way that lessons are presented in a holistic manner, covering both subject ideas and life skills.
38. Leaders utilise the curriculum to promote essential values of democracy, the importance of law in our society, individual liberty, and a tolerance for all diverse groups of people. They do this throughout the school, beginning with stories, conversations and interactions in the kindergarten and lower school and developing into conscious, guided discussions in weekly religion and global Issues lessons in the middle and high schools. These cover topics that often are raised by the pupils themselves, such as the use of artificial intelligence, misogyny and racism, all discussed in recent lessons.
39. The school has recently expanded its programme for supporting pupils with their career choices and preparation for life, working with pupils in Years 7 to 9 on self-assessment and what they might want to do in high school and taking the older pupils to careers fairs. As a result, older pupils feel able to ask teachers for advice regarding their futures and feel well supported in terms of preparation for university applications and other avenues.
40. Pupils, supported by staff, contribute to wider society through their voluntary work, such as their involvement with clearing litter and planting trees in a local park and their support for the local food bank. Their involvement in the latter arose from ideas put forward by the pupils' council. Pupils raise money for charities in various ways and express their understanding that they have a responsibility towards the community.
41. Pupils also demonstrate a sense of responsibility to others through their participation in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) and the taking on of voluntary roles inside and outside of the school. The pupils' council has a key role in the school. It meets weekly, usually without a member of staff and tackles issues pupils identify as needing discussion, such as how to resolve social issues identified by the pupils or plans for raising funds for projects.
42. The curriculum provides some level of economic education at different stages, such as a module on business mathematics in Year 6 and in the early years, where children explore concepts in selling products, fixing prices and keeping tallies of their sales.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

43. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

44. The school's safeguarding policy and procedures are comprehensive and meet the requirements of current statutory guidance. There are robust procedures in place to respond to any allegations or disclosures that might be made.
45. Leaders liaise effectively with relevant external agencies to ensure that pupils affected by safeguarding issues are supported appropriately.
46. The trustees monitor the schools' safeguarding arrangements effectively, reviewing the policy annually and keeping themselves aware of any issues that might occur in school. There is a designated trustee for safeguarding with broad experience in this area, who visits the school regularly and works closely with the school's safeguarding team. The trustees review any safeguarding issues as part of all their meetings.
47. The safeguarding team, including in the early years, receive regular and appropriate training for their role and in turn they ensure that all the staff are suitably trained and informed of changes to practice and procedure. The designated safeguarding lead in the school provides training for all staff on induction and maintains records of courses undertaken. Staff understand how to respond to any safeguarding concern that might arise.
48. Leaders and staff implement the clear policies on internet safety. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Appropriate internet usage is supported by suitable monitoring and filtering systems within the school.
49. Leaders ensure that all required safer recruitment checks are carried out for all staff, trustees and volunteers and recorded appropriately. Trustees check the single central register of appointments at regular intervals to ensure that this remains the case.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 50. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	The St Michael Steiner School
Department for Education number	313/6002
Registered charity number	1094960
Address	The St Michael Steiner School Park Road Hanworth Park London TW13 6PN
Phone number	020 8893 1299
Email address	info@stmichaelsteiner.com
Website	www.stmichaelsteiner.hounslow.sch.uk
Chair of College of Teachers	Mr Stuart Purdy
Chair of Trustees	Mr Adam Norsworthy
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	133
Date of previous inspection	11 September 2023.

Information about the school

51. The St Michael Steiner School is an independent co-educational day school, situated in Hanworth. It was founded in 2001. A registered charity, the school is administered by the company directors as trustees. The curriculum is based on the work of Rudolf Steiner. The school is run by the teachers and administrative staff working together as The College, who elect a chair. This is the main decision-making body of the school.
52. The school consists of a kindergarten, lower and middle schools and a high school.
53. There are 23 children in the early years, divided into two kindergarten classes, which include children up to the end of Year 1.
54. The school has identified six pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
55. English is an additional language for six pupils.
56. The school states its aims are to be a modern, urban school with a continually evolving curriculum based on ongoing observation and understanding of child development. It seeks to offer a flexible programme of activities that develops practical skills, imagination and thinking, and acknowledges and addresses the needs and interests of modern children. The school endeavours to provide an education that will prepare children from diverse backgrounds to orientate themselves towards whatever comes to meet them in life.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

5 to 7 March 2024

57. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

58. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair of trustees
- discussions with the members of staff who form the college of teachers in the school
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

59. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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