

# SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

*Independent professional inspection of schools associated with the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship*

## INSPECTION REPORT

### INSPECTION CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO SECTION 162A OF THE EDUCATION ACT 2002

<b>Name of school:</b>	The St Michael Steiner School
<b>DfE number:</b>	212/6404
<b>Inspection team:</b>	Reporting Inspector: Mrs Eileen McAndrew  Supporting Inspectors: Dr Martin Bradley Mr Brian Fitzgerald  Lay Inspector: Mr Ewout Van Manen
<b>Dates of inspection:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> November 2010

### CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

**Section A: Introduction and summary**

**Section B: Compliance with regulations for registration**

**Section C: The quality of organisation and management**

**Section D: Early Years Foundation Stage**

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: The St Michael Steiner School

Address of school: 5 Merton Road, Wandsworth,  
London SW18 5ST

Telephone number: 020 8870 0500

Email address: info@stmichaelsteinerschool.co.uk

Proprietor: Trustees of the St Michael Steiner School

Name of the Chair of  
the College of Teachers: Edwin Ladaga

Name of the Chair of the Trustees: Ann Druitt

Name of Administrator: Andrea Ladanyi

DfE number: 212/6404

Type of school: Independent school associated with the Steiner Fellowship

Age range of pupils and students: 3-14 years

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll:	(Full time)	Boys: 24	Girls: 38
	(Part time)	Boys: 6	Girls: 5

Number of children under 5

Boys: 3	Girls: 5
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Number of pupils with statements of  
special educational need:

Boys: 1
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Annual fees: £4,375-£5,800

Type of inspection: Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Inspection Team:

Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Eileen McAndrew
Supporting Inspectors:	Dr Martin Bradley Mr Brian Fitzgerald
Lay Inspector:	Mr Ewout Van Manen

Dates of inspection: 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> November 2010

## SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

### Purpose and scope of the inspection:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service in accordance with Section 162(A) (1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by the Service and the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and agreed with the Department for Education (DfE). It was conducted by independent professional inspectors who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations. The professional inspectors were accompanied by a trained lay inspector who looked at agreed aspects of the school's management and ethos and reported on these to the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. His findings are summarised in Section C of this document, but this section is not a statutory part of the inspection process.

### Information about the school:

The St Michael Steiner School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged three to fourteen. Its educational practice is inspired by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner and expressed through the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. The school was established in 2001. The school is located on the upper floors of the buildings of West Hill primary school in the London borough of Wandsworth. There are eighty-one pupils on roll, of whom nineteen are in the Early Years Foundation Stage and are accommodated in the two Kindergarten classes. Class 1 is single age and thereafter classes are of pupils of mixed ages. Admission is non-selective. Nine pupils have English as an additional language and speak English well. Thirty-five pupils are bi-lingual. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school aims *'to enable children to find their many and varied paths in this world, whoever they are and wherever they live.'*

The school follows the Steiner Waldorf system for naming classes. The corresponding National Curriculum names for the classes in the school at the time of the inspection are:

Steiner class names	National Curriculum names
Kindergarten	Nursery, Year R, Year 1
Class 1	Year 2
Class 2/3	Year 3/4
Class 4/5	Year 5/6
Class 6/7	Year 7/8

The school was last inspected in 2007.

### Summary of main findings:

The St Michael Steiner School works assiduously to achieve its aim and provides a good quality of education. The strong belief and adherence to the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner influence all aspects of the school's ethos and guide all its provision. Pupils are cherished and respected as unique individuals with gifts and talents to be fostered and nurtured within a distinctive school community. A curriculum with good

features, allied to good teaching, enables pupils to make good progress and become effective learners who have positive attitudes and who apply themselves well to the tasks they are given. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good with some features which are outstanding. Procedures to safeguard pupils' welfare are satisfactory, and pupils feel safe in school. Some policies are incomplete and do not reflect current practice. Assessment is thorough, but there is no formal framework to ensure consistent assessment against agreed school aims. The accommodation is very limited, but teachers make good use of the available space. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, pleased with the education their children receive and believe that teachers work hard for their children.

The school fails to meet a number of the regulations and a number of EYFS requirements. The latter are listed at the end of the report.

**What the school does well:**

- promotes and fosters pupils' spiritual development;
- develops very good relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves;
- values and encourages creative and aesthetic achievement; and
- provides good and sometimes outstanding teaching throughout the school.

**What the school must do to comply with the regulations:**

- devise a framework for assessment based on the school's aims;
- improve the aspects of welfare, health and safety recorded in Part 3;
- ensure that all trustees are subject to satisfactory clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau; and
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who may become ill.

**The school complies with the Equality Act 2010.**

## **SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

### **PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school**

#### **The quality of the curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. It provides pupils of all ages and abilities with a suitably wide range of learning opportunities. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing pupils' linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative skills. The curriculum successfully enables pupils to acquire good skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy.

The curriculum is carefully planned around Steiner Waldorf themes that form the basis of the two-hourly daily main lessons from Class 1 upwards. The main lesson block is planned for periods of about three or four weeks, and is carefully selected in relation to the ages and interests of the pupils and to reflect the seasons of the year and major religious festivals. The planning sets out detailed overarching aims for each of these blocks and is expanded through weekly and individual lesson planning, concluding with a review of what has been taught. The quality of curriculum planning by individual teachers shows some variation; while much planning is of a high quality, some is significantly more limited. This in turn makes it more difficult to ensure appropriate progress for pupils over time. The best planning details the content and methods to be used, the resources required and the tasks to be undertaken, appropriately matched to the different levels of capability and need amongst the pupils. The planning generally makes good reference to links between the various subjects, helping pupils to make productive connections in their learning. Where planning is less good, it lists the content but lacks sufficient detail of how this will be shaped to meet the needs of different ability groups within the class.

The main lesson provides an integrated approach to learning, including English and mathematics, and good opportunities for pupils to carry out project work in subjects across the curriculum. It also serves to develop systematically pupils' reading and appreciation of mythological tales, stories and poetry. The curriculum at all ages is enriched by opportunities for pupils to widen their experiences through music, science, woodwork and other crafts, modelling and painting. The additional linguistic dimension of Spanish and German expands the curriculum for pupils at appropriate ages. Opportunities for physical development are satisfactory and include eurythmy and sport. However, physical education and sports are limited by the constraints of the premises. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of out-of-school activities and visits. These include a five-day visit to the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire for pupils in Class 6/7, local riverside walks for geography and natural history for Class 4/5, all of which add worthwhile first-hand learning experiences much valued by pupils. Visits to the local library for Class 2/3 for storytelling and borrowing books takes pupils into the local community and introduces them to a valuable public resource, compensating to some extent for the lack of a school library. The annual Steiner 'Olympics' at Michael House School for pupils in Class 4/5 is a highlight of the year and at the same time Class 3 pupils have the excitement of camping on a nearby farm.

Pupils identified as having learning difficulties, including a pupil with a statement of special educational needs, are well provided for. The teacher who works with them

has very good liaison with the class teacher so that support in the classroom and during one-to-one tuition is precisely focused enabling pupils to make good progress.

The school includes personal, social and health education as an integral part of the curriculum for all classes. This provides a good foundation for pupils for the next phase of their education and for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. The 'World of Work' unit in Class 4/5 is particularly good in providing pupils with increased awareness of life after school.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

Teaching is predominantly good and occasionally outstanding and, as a result, pupils make good progress. The strong emphasis throughout the school on a wide range of oral and listening skills contributes significantly to pupils' good progress in these areas. Pupils become increasingly confident and articulate speakers, able to ask questions, to clarify their thinking through discussion, and to contribute to each other's understanding.

All teachers have a secure knowledge of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and its aims. Lesson planning, however, varies from excellent, providing a robust model for the dissemination of good practice, to minimal in quality and content. For example, main lesson planning in Class 4/5 provides a comprehensive overview of the theme and how it will be developed; it identifies precise aims and specifies the kinds of investigations which will be pursued. In contrast, where lesson planning consists primarily of a list of the topics to be covered, it lacks the detail to make clear what pupils of a given age are expected to learn. This in turn makes it more difficult to ensure that pupils are making the maximum progress over the longer term.

In the best lessons, teachers have a deep understanding of the content and philosophy of the Steiner Waldorf themes and the skill and assurance to interpret these in ways which capture the engagement of the pupils. Teachers are able to plan interesting, imaginative work, encouraging pupils to explore new areas of learning, building effectively on what they already know and making productive links between different subjects in the curriculum. Main lessons develop themes which investigate the curriculum in ways which appeal to the particular pupils in a class, so that they willingly apply themselves to the tasks they are given and in consequence achieve well. Similarly, lessons follow the familiar rhythms and associated activities of the Steiner classroom to support, enrich and refine pupils' ability to learn through hand, heart and head.

In the very small number of examples where lessons observed were less successful, teachers lacked the skills to manage the distracting or boisterous behaviour of two or three pupils, whose persistent interruptions adversely affected the learning of others. Specialist subject teaching makes a strong contribution to the overall quality of teaching, particularly in music, recitation, handwork and German. In these specialist lessons, teachers also showed significant expertise in their ability to encourage good behaviour through particularly engaging and well-chosen activities and tasks. Support in class for pupils with special needs and for the pupil with a statement of special educational needs is good.

Pupils have a positive attitude to learning and make good progress. In almost all lessons, pupils are lively, enthusiastic learners, able to concentrate and stay on task for extended periods of time and to take satisfaction from their achievement. Pupils

of all ages said that they loved school and where lessons are well planned and taught, their enjoyment is evident in their motivation, engagement and rapid progress.

Day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory, but there is no agreed framework through which pupils' work is assessed against stated aims, as required by the regulations. In common with some Steiner schools, formal marking of pupils' work is a matter for an individual teacher's decision and is not undertaken. All teachers carry out continuous assessments of aspects of pupils' progress in academic, emotional, social and physical development. This is achieved through close scrutiny of pupils' work in class, through regular child studies and through observations recorded regularly from main lesson work throughout the year. Some of these are highly detailed and of a very good quality. In addition, at the end of each main lesson four-week block, teachers are expected to write a review which details how pupils have responded in terms of their learning, attitude and achievement. This practice is not consistently followed, but where it is undertaken it gives a clear assessment of each pupil's progress in relation to the learning aims set out in the planning.

As a result of the assessments that are undertaken, teachers have a good knowledge of all aspects of an individual pupil's strengths and weaknesses in academic and personal development, but these are not specifically related to expectations of achievement at a given age or to stated aims agreed by the whole school. The school is aware that this matter must be addressed as a matter of urgency and has begun to draft a policy for early implementation.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school meets all but one of the requirements.*

***What does the school need to do in order to fully meet the requirements?***

- devise a framework for assessment based on the school's aims (regulation 3(g)).

**PART 2 - The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good, with outstanding features especially in respect to their spiritual and social development. Pupils' spiritual development is a particular strength throughout the school.

During the main lessons, the spiritual dimension is fostered through singing, rhythmic movement and the recital of poetry. Stories of myth and history, the study of literature, movement in eurythmy and creative art work develop a strong spiritual awareness, reflective thinking and awareness of others. Pupils develop a strong sense of identity and self-worth and personal insight by the time they reach Class 6/7. Teachers respect and promote the development of each child according to his or her nature, in keeping with the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and methodology. Pupils' spiritual awareness is also encouraged and supported through participation in religious and seasonal festivals, as they become increasingly aware of the natural rhythm of the seasons. In the same way, the spiritual elements found in the aesthetic and humanities areas of the curriculum are explored explicitly.

The curriculum and teaching enable pupils to build an increasing understanding of moral values and respect for the laws of society and the code of conduct within the school community. Work in the main lesson and in history and geography contributes effectively to pupils' understanding of the shared and agreed values of society. It was very evident in many lessons that pupils had developed a strong moral awareness in their understanding and tolerance of others' circumstances, attitudes, actions and views. Pupils' behaviour is generally very good, although the action of just two or three younger pupils was at times disruptive in lessons.

Pupils' social development is outstanding. It is particularly noticeable in the care shown by pupils on several occasions when looking after others who had experienced difficulties. Pupils increasingly develop the personal qualities needed to work together in the multi-ethnic and multicultural community of the school. Pupils display very good interpersonal skills and make a strong positive contribution to the school community through a wide range of responsibilities in class and in lessons. For example, they are often encouraged to contribute to or even participate in lesson organisation, as in music in Class 2/3 and a main lesson in Class 4/5. Older pupils stated in discussion that they would gladly take more responsibilities for younger pupils, and added that a start had been made by having a Class 6/7 pupil assist in the Kindergarten. By the time pupils reach Class 6/7, they are well informed about the public institutions and services of England.

Pupils' cultural awareness is of a high standard. The school has pupils from many ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and equality and diversity are valued. The school encourages appreciation of, and respect for, different cultural traditions, together with a spirit of tolerance and harmony in classrooms. The celebration of religious and seasonal festivals, such as Martinmas, Advent and Diwali, helps pupils to know and understand something of cultural similarities and differences. In the same way, the curriculum explores a broad range of narratives, history, geography, art and music contributing to pupils' general knowledge of cultural traditions, including modern day Britain, the cultures of the ancient world and those of other lands and societies.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

### **PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory with good elements, although some aspects require review. The school has most policies in place, although some, notably those for anti-bullying and health and safety, do not make reference to the relevant DfE guidance documents, making revisions more difficult as and when these are necessary. The school has a code of conduct for behaviour and a policy on exclusions and suspensions, but there is no overall policy for good behaviour outlining the range of ways of promoting good behaviour and the sanctions to be used in the event of poor behaviour. This leaves teachers and pupils without a shared view of expectations and sanctions. In contrast, the Kindergarten classes have a behaviour policy and apply this effectively.

Risk assessments are made regularly and those for on-site activities are appropriate. Those referring to activities conducted off-site do not generally consider the risks whilst pupils are travelling, instead focusing on issues whilst at the destination.



Fire safety policies are in place and are satisfactory. The school has recognised that the current evacuation procedures, using one staircase, are not appropriate and a second staircase for the use of the younger pupils has been identified, although the policy does not yet refer to this. The fire drill records are incomplete; they log only four occasions in the last four years when fire drills were held, and these records do not always indicate the year in which the drill was held. As fire drills are held regularly at the same time as those for West Hill primary school, records are held in that school, but there are no separate records for the Steiner school.

The school has a recently devised a first aid policy and this is in the process of being implemented and understood by all staff. Admission and attendance registers are maintained appropriately and record pupils' full details, including parental contact information.

Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through main lesson themes, some food preparation work and the organic lunches provided on Fridays. Pupils understand the importance of exercise to healthy living and have a sensible approach to their own safety and show consideration for one another.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*No.*

***What does the school need to do in order to fully meet the requirements?***

- *provide a behaviour policy for the main school (regulation 9);*
- *ensure that risk assessments for work off-site include assessments relating to the journey as well as whilst at the destination (regulation 12); and*
- *ensure that fire drills are all recorded and fully dated (regulation 13).*

**PART 4 - Suitability of the staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All staff and two trustees have been subject to satisfactory clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level. There is no evidence of this clearance for the third trustee. The school's effective employment procedures ensure that all required checks on staff are carried out prior to appointment. The single central register meets requirements.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*No.*

***What does the school need to do in order to fully meet the requirements?***

- *ensure that all trustees are subject to satisfactory clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau (regulation 21(6)(8)).*

**PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The school premises are located within West Hill primary school and are suitable for safe and effective learning. Space is very limited and to some extent curtails the provision. Classrooms are of adequate size for the numbers of pupils attending. There are no specialist rooms, so all practical work such as eurythmy and woodwork

must be done in classrooms. There is no library for pupils to enjoy browsing or to research aspects of their work.

Good quality recreational space is shared with West Hill primary school, but is two floors downstairs and is particularly disadvantageous to the Kindergarten children who need easy and continuous access to outdoor play space. Good use is made of St Georges Park and Wimbledon Common whenever the weather permits.

The school makes provision for pupils who may become ill, but is aware that facilities do not meet regulations. The school is actively seeking new premises.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school meets all but one of the requirements.*

***What does the school need to do in order to fully meet the requirements?***

- *provide appropriate facilities for pupils who may become ill (regulation 23(k)).*

**PART 6 - The quality of information for parents**

The provision of information to parents is good. Parents are an integral part of the school community and are made very welcome. They receive regular information on day-to-day activities through a variety of written and oral methods, including through the website. The website and the parents' handbook contain useful reference information and policies, and the recently revised prospectus is informative.

There are regular parents' evenings, which cover the curriculum and provide an opportunity to discuss the children's progress. In addition, the teachers communicate with the parents in person and via email. This keeps the parents updated on their children's progress, development and needs. Email is also used to provide helpful preparatory notes for the parents' evenings.

Parents receive detailed annual reports which cover all aspects of their child's academic, social and emotional development and also usefully include information on the work undertaken by the class. Pupils' reports are of good quality and give parents detailed information about their children's progress and achievements across all areas of development.

The parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire are happy with the school's provision, several of them expressing the view that they regard it as a privilege to send their children here.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*Yes.*

**PART 7 - The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure**

The school's complaints policy and procedures comply fully with regulatory requirements. There were no complaints during the last year.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*Yes.*

## **SECTION C: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT, AND MAINTENANCE OF THE ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL**

*This section is not a requirement of the Education Act 2002. The business organisation and management of the school were inspected by the Lay Inspector, who has written this section of the report.*

### **The quality of the organisation and management of the school**

The St Michael Steiner School is strongly committed to Steiner Waldorf education and there is a strong Steiner Waldorf ethos throughout the school.

St Michael has a broadly traditional Steiner Waldorf school management system with the College of Teachers taking responsibility for most aspects of the school. The College takes decisions on business as well as pedagogical matters. The College delegates some appropriate management tasks to the School Management Team. The School Management Team consists of two senior teachers and two parents. Additionally there are School Support Teams consisting of members of the School Association. These teams take responsibility for specific management areas such as finance, fundraising, publicity and communications, outreach, maintenance and premises. Each Support Team is made up of parents and includes at least one teacher. Where necessary, professional support is engaged, for example, that of accountants and solicitors.

The Board of Trustees consists of three independent members. They do not meet regularly as trustees but only if and when there are specific issues that require their attention. They do attend the School Association meetings which normally take place once a term.

The running of the school is almost totally delegated to the College of Teachers and the administrator. The constitution of the school is clearly documented, outlining the management structure as well as how decisions are to be made. The relatively small size of the school ensures that there is a very good working relationship between staff. Communication between colleagues is easy and often fairly informal.

It is evident from talking to the staff and from the parent questionnaires that the teachers are dedicated and committed to the Steiner Waldorf methodology and the philosophy that underpins it. This contributes to the good working relationship. The teachers act as mentors to each other and arrange professional development courses. The Early Years staff have a structured professional development programme.

The school is planning to increase further the responsibility of the school administrator in order to match the potential growth of the school. This is a good development.

Overall, the quality of the school's organisation and management is good.

### ***Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?***

The trustees might like to take into consideration the following suggestions as to where specific improvements could be made:

- ensure that the trustees are engaged in those aspects of the school for which they are accountable and bring more objectivity to the management of the school by holding more frequent meetings of the trustees, some with the School Management Team;
- improve staff professional development and quality assurance generally by establishing a clearly structured staff appraisal system, building on its findings and complementing the mentoring already in place.

## **PART D: EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

### **The outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The children enjoy their learning and their levels of achievement are good. They are safeguarded effectively and feel safe and this enables their confidence to develop well. Through daily snacks they are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. During the inspection Diwali was celebrated, and the Indian food brought in by a parent was greatly enjoyed by both Kindergarten classes. The children make very positive contributions to the classes, helping to clear away equipment and showing their developing independence when putting on waterproofs and wellington boots before going outside. In these ways they demonstrate the skills which they are acquiring for the future.

### **The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The quality of provision is good and children's welfare is promoted effectively. Following regular routines, such as the rhythm of the daily sessions of the week and celebrating festivals and the seasons of the year, the provision promotes the children's learning and development. Teaching is good overall and is frequently outstanding. It enables the children to acquire good speaking and listening skills, and particularly good social skills, helping one another and cooperating well. Despite not having direct access to outdoor provision, the staff ensure that children play outside daily. Once a week the whole session is held on Wimbledon Common, with equipment and resources taken there by staff. This is a significant feature of the provision which enables the children to experience the natural environment and to develop their physical skills.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The leadership and management are good with some outstanding features. It supports improvement through the daily staff discussions which critically consider ways of developing the work of the Kindergarten classes. This regular self-evaluation process is good; the broader overview of documentation and their availability to parents is satisfactory. Decisions are shared to ensure that the two classes work broadly in parallel with one another. Resources are deployed extremely effectively, including the use of outdoor provision. Equality and diversity are outstandingly well promoted. Safeguarding is satisfactory and risk assessments are effective. The fire evacuation procedures do not provide a second means of exiting the building besides the one main staircase. The school is aware of this and intends to put procedures in place imminently. The Kindergarten classes liaise well with West Hill primary school and the local authority supports them through in-service training and work on the Early Years Profile assessments. Relationships with parents are good; however, although a draft exists, there is as yet no Kindergarten handbook for parents. The relevant documents are mostly available, but are in several separate locations, such as on notice boards, at the reception, or in classes, rather than readily available in one central document.

**Overall effectiveness: how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The overall effectiveness of the setting is good. It meets the needs of the children effectively and has a satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

***Does the school meet the statutory requirements?***

*No.*

***What does the school need to do in order to fully meet the requirements?***

*Provide parents with details of:*

- *the types of activities provided;*
- *all relevant policies and procedures; and*
- *details of how to contact Ofsted and SIS.*

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship. Further copies of the report are available from the School Inspection Service website: [www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk](http://www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk)