# Admissions Policy

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| Policy Owner: | Senior Leadership Team |
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## 1. Policy Statement

Michael Hall is a Waldorf School that seeks to educate the whole child through a developmentally appropriate and relationship-based approach to learning. We welcome children with a wide range of abilities, strengths and interests and recognise that every child develops at their own pace.

Our admissions process is designed to help us understand each child as an individual and consider whether Michael Hall is likely to be a suitable educational environment in which they can thrive. We work in partnership with families to understand a child's educational, social, emotional and wellbeing needs, and to explore how these can best be supported within the resources and expertise available at the School.

## 2. Admissions Principles

The aim of our admissions procedure is to identify children for whom the educational approach, ethos and curriculum of Michael Hall are likely to be a

suitable and beneficial match. Admissions decisions are made with the best interests of the child and the wider school community in mind.

Michael Hall is committed to equal treatment for all, regardless of sex/gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or any protected characteristic. We do not discriminate regarding entry to the School in any of these ways.

Michael Hall seeks to make admissions decisions that are fair, transparent and centred on the needs of the child. Decisions are based on a holistic understanding of each applicant and may take into account educational needs, developmental readiness, wellbeing, previous educational experience, class composition and the School's ability to provide an appropriate level of support. The School does not operate an academic selection process and does not admit pupils on the basis of examination performance alone.

### a) Meeting the needs of the individual child

Michael Hall is committed to making reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs in accordance with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. We welcome applications from children with a range of additional needs and will consider carefully, in partnership with their families, whether we can provide an appropriate educational experience and level of support. The School will discuss reasonable adjustments with parents and, where appropriate, relevant professionals. If an external assessment is considered necessary as part of this process, the School will discuss this with parents in advance; any associated costs will be explained.

We ask parents to discuss any identified or suspected special educational needs, disabilities or medical conditions with the School at the earliest opportunity. Parents must provide copies of any educational psychologist, medical or other relevant reports that have been completed, so that we can understand the child's needs and consider how best to support them.

This policy provides guidelines about the admissions process at Michael Hall.

## 3. The School Structure

Michael Hall School is structured in the following sections:

- Early Childhood, comprising Parent and Child Groups (aged 0-4), Saplings (aged 2-4) and Kindergarten (aged 4-6)
- Lower School, comprising Classes 1 to 8 (ages 6 to 14)
- Upper School, comprising Classes 9 to 12 (ages 15 to 18)

Michael Hall provides continuity of education throughout a child's school journey. However, as children progress through the School, admission to one section of the School does not guarantee admission to another.

Whilst our admissions remain open for external applications all year round, internally, there are entry points between Saplings and Kindergarten, Kindergarten and Class 1 and Class 8 and Class 9. An admissions process will take place at these stages to ensure the School can continue to meet educational needs into the next developmental stage.

Where the Lower School operates two parallel classes for children in the same age group, the School will decide which class to assign a particular applicant to. This will be based on our objective of creating broadly balanced, socially cohesive, mixed ability classes. In the event that a new class is opened in the same age group, students of the existing class who have joined within that year and sometimes in previous years, may be asked to move to the new class.

See Appendix A for a comparison chart of Michael Hall's classes and the year and age group equivalents more commonly used in the education sector.

## 4. The Admissions Process

### a) Parent & Child

Admission to Parent and Child groups usually follows a free taster session and the completion of an application form. Families are requested to sign up and commit to attending for a full term. Children can be any age between birth and four. We do not charge an application fee for Parent and Child.

### b) Saplings & Kindergarten

A formal application should be submitted with the application fee* via the website. Supporting documentation will then be requested by the Admissions registrar. Once all documentation has been received by the School, a meeting will be arranged with the child, parents and an Early Childhood Practitioner.

The final decision regarding admission to Early Childhood at Michael Hall rests with the Early Childhood Manager. The School will consider whether it can provide an appropriate environment and support for the child, taking account of the child's needs and the resources available. The decision will be communicated within two working weeks of the meeting.

Once a child has been approved for admission, an official offer letter and contract will be sent to both parents and must be signed and returned within five working days of receipt, to secure the child's place. A £500 advance payment of fees will be required before the child can join the School, which will be deducted from the first terms' fees. This will only be refunded should notice of withdrawal be received at least 3 months in advance of the child's proposed start date.

Children wishing to join Kindergarten from Saplings will be given priority over other applications and must apply two full terms before they are due to start. Lead practitioners and the Early Childhood Manager will work closely with families to

identify individual transition points for children moving from Saplings to Kindergarten.

For a 4-year-old child to start Kindergarten in September, they must have turned four by August 31st. For a child to start Kindergarten in January, they must have turned 4 by December 30th. Entry into Kindergarten is at the start of a term or half term only.

Michael Hall accepts entry to Saplings all year round.

Admission to Kindergarten is for a minimum of four consecutive morning sessions per week on entry, increasing to five sessions a week when the child's group leader and/or Early Childhood Manager advises in collaboration with parents. Attendance for five sessions a week is mandatory for all students starting the term after their fifth birthday. Michael Hall Kindergarten and Saplings do not accept multiple setting registrations, however children attending Saplings may also attend Parent and Child sessions at Michael Hall with family.

Admission to Saplings is for a minimum of three sessions a week.

### Saplings Settling-In Period

Children who are new to Saplings are entitled to a settling-in period of one half term. If it becomes clear during this time that the child is not yet ready for the provision, parents may withdraw their child at the end of the settling-in period without incurring the usual notice charges. If notice of withdrawal is given after the final day of the half-term settling-in period, a full term's fees will be payable.

### c) Lower, Middle and Upper School

Families are requested to submit a formal application with the application fee* via the website. The Admissions Registrar will request supporting documentation. Once all documentation has been received, an initial meeting will be arranged with a teacher/guardian and, where appropriate following review of the child's information, a member of the Inclusion Team. To make a fully informed decision, the School requires reports from the child's previous setting covering attainment, attendance, behaviour and any identified special educational needs or support needs.

*The application fee is non-refundable, however we will refund the application fee for children whose application is not accepted by the School.

Applicants to the School are assessed for entry to the School by the following methods:

1. Review of reports from previous Schools and attendance records.
2. Formal assessments by our Inclusion Team. These professionals will review information gathered about a child's Special Educational Needs.

3. Meetings with and/or observation of the child by the prospective Class Teacher or Class Guardian.
4. In cases of doubt or where more information is required the School may contact the applicant's current School, and/or require a report from an educational psychologist and/or hold discussions with the child's medical advisors in order to assess the child's needs before reaching a decision on a particular application.
5. Taster days are available on request, and on some occasions, we will request this to assess suitability to the school or to a particular class group.

Admissions decisions are based on whether the School believes it can provide an educational environment in which the child can flourish, make appropriate progress and have their educational and wellbeing needs met. The final decision rests with the Principal, who will consider the child's needs alongside the resources, expertise and environment available at the School. The decision will be communicated within two working weeks of the interview.

Once a child has been approved for admission, an official offer letter and contract will be sent to both parents and must be signed and returned within five working days of receipt, to secure the child's place. A £500 advance payment of fees will be required before the child can join the School, which will be deducted from the first terms' fees. This will only be refunded should notice of withdrawal be received at least 3 months in advance of the child's proposed start date.

We also require that prospective parents read and agree to our Parent Code of Conduct and by the acceptance of a place, agree to the terms set out within the policy.

New students will be placed in the class which matches their current age group except in exceptional circumstances, which will be at the discretion of the Principal.

Many siblings join us at Michael Hall. Siblings are given priority where appropriate, but each application is considered individually. On occasion, the School may conclude that a different educational setting would better meet a child's particular needs or circumstances.

We ask that parents aim to start school at the start of the school year but will consider entry throughout the year. The cut off birth date for children entering classes 1-12 is normally 31st August.

### d) Applying for a place

Applications are considered throughout the year, subject to availability and the time needed to complete the admissions process. Families are encouraged to apply as early as possible to allow time for meetings, review of reports and planning for a successful transition.

## 6. Funding

### a) Fee assistance

Michael Hall has a Fee Assistance programme to help families who need financial support, as detailed in the Fee Assistance Policy. Families are welcome to discuss the programme confidentially with the Finance Team before making an application.

Fee assistance is not available to pupils in their first year at Michael Hall. This includes pupils who already have siblings at the School (who may or may not receive fee assistance). There is no fee assistance for Parent and Child, Saplings or Kindergarten.

Families are welcome to discuss the Fee Assistance programme confidentially with the Finance Team before making an application.

While Michael Hall does not offer fee assistance for children in the Early Childhood section, we currently offer a discretionary supplement for families who meet the eligibility criteria. Further information, including details of how to apply, can be found on our website.

### c) Learning Support Fees

In a small number of cases, a child's level of need may require provision beyond that which the School can reasonably sustain from its own resources. In such circumstances, the School will work closely with parents and, where appropriate, external agencies to explore all available sources of support and funding. Decisions regarding ongoing placement will only be considered after careful consultation and exploration of all reasonable alternatives.

## 7. International Students

The School will consider applications from international families in line with its admissions procedures and applicable UK immigration requirements. International students will only be accepted where they will either live with immediate family members in the UK or require a host family, which is arranged by the School through an external organisation.

Families are responsible for ensuring that their child has the immigration permission required to study in the UK. Michael Hall cannot currently provide a visa or a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies.

## 6. Class Sizes and Priority for Places

- For the Parent and Child Group, a maximum of 7 families with children from birth to 4 years' old
- In Saplings, we have a maximum of 8-10 children per session.
- For the Kindergarten, we regard a class as complete at 16.
- For Classes 1 to 8, although there is no fixed size for a Lower School class, we typically consider a class complete at around 26 students.
- For Classes 9 to 12, there is no set class size, although exam subjects tend to be comparably small. We will consider classes 9-12 "full", only if we cannot sustain the logistics/health and safety needs.

When a class or year group is deemed to be complete, the School reserves the right to close the class or year group to new admissions. The decision to close a class is taken by the Senior Leadership Team after appropriate consultation.

In the event that a new class is opened in the same age group, students of the existing class which have joined within that year or in previous years, may be asked to move to the new class.

The School operates a waiting list when a class or group is closed to new admissions. Where there are more applicants than places, the order of priority is:

    - Children progressing from Saplings into Kindergarten and Kindergarten to Class 1
    - Children of staff
    - Siblings
    - Children transferring from other Waldorf Steiner Schools
    - Length of time on waiting list
- The waiting list will continue for a year group until the end of the academic year.
- Applicants on the waiting list who fail to provide the required application documents or respond to requests from the Admissions Registrar in a timely manner, may be removed from the waiting list.

Places are offered for a specific start date and if declined, the child's application will be withdrawn. In the event that we receive a request to defer a place, and a waiting list is in place for the next entry point, the child will join the end of the waiting list.

These priority criteria support continuity of education for existing pupils and families while helping the School maintain balanced and sustainable class groups.

## 7. Taster Days (Lower, Middle and Upper School only)

After the initial meeting, we may invite a child to spend a few Taster Days in the relevant class before a decision is made. This gives the child an opportunity to experience the School and allows the wider teaching team to get to know them and consider how they respond to the school environment. Taster Days are not available for Kindergarten or Saplings.

## 8. Separated Parents

Michael Hall recognises that children may be part of families where parents have separated, are divorcing or are experiencing changes in family circumstances. We aim to support children and families through these transitions in a way that promotes the child's wellbeing, stability and educational experience.

- The School will place the child's welfare, wellbeing and educational interests at the centre of its decisions and communications; work constructively with all people who hold parental responsibility; and remain impartial in family disputes. We will communicate with those entitled to receive information about the child unless a court order, legal restriction or safeguarding concern prevents this. Parents should keep the School informed of any relevant changes to parental responsibility, court orders or other legal arrangements.

- Where parents share parental responsibility, they should consult one another about important decisions concerning their child's education, including applying to a new school. The School will ask for confirmation that those with parental responsibility have been consulted before admitting a student. If the School becomes aware of a dispute about an application, it may pause the process while the position is clarified and may request relevant court orders or seek legal advice. The School will not determine private family disputes and will act in accordance with applicable law, safeguarding duties and any relevant court order.

- The School will comply with its legal obligations relating to parental responsibility, information sharing, safeguarding, data protection and child welfare, and will have regard to the Department for Education guidance, "Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility."

## 9. Complaints

Admissions decisions are made following careful consideration of the information available and are not subject to appeal. However, if parents believe that the admissions process has not been followed correctly or fairly, they may submit a written complaint to the Principal within five working days of the admissions decision. Complaints will be considered in accordance with the School's Concerns and Complaints Procedure, available on the School's website.

## Appendix A

This chart shows the ages and classes children would be in at Michael Hall compared with School in the State Sector

| Michael Hall | Department | Age | Mainstream |
|---|---|---|---|
| Parent & Child Groups | Early Childhood | 0 - 4 | Playgroup, Nursery, Pre-School |
| Saplings Year 1 | Early Childhood | 2 – 3 | Playgroup, Nursery, Pre-School |
| Saplings Year 2 | Early Childhood | 3 - 4 | |
| Kindergarten Year 1 | Early Childhood | 4 - 5 | Primary (Reception) |
| Kindergarten Year 2 | Early Childhood | 5 - 6 | Year 1 |
| Class 1 | Lower School | 6 - 7 | Year 2 |
| Class 2 | Lower School | 7 - 8 | Year 3 |
| Class 3 | Lower School | 8 - 9 | Year 4 |
| Class 4 | Lower School | 9 - 10 | Year 5 |
| Class 5 | Lower School | 10 - 11 | Year 6 |
| Class 6 | Middle School | 11 - 12 | Year 7 (Secondary) |
| Class 7 | Middle School | 12 - 13 | Year 8 |
| Class 8 | Middle School | 13 - 14 | Year 9 |
| Class 9 | Upper School | 14 - 15 | Year 10 |
| Class 10 | Upper School | 15 - 16 | Year 11 |
| Class 11 | Upper School | 16 - 17 | Year 12 (College, Sixth Form) |
| Class 12 | Upper School | 17 - 18 | Year 13 (College, Sixth Form) |