

What to expect in the Middle School



Michael Hall
a Steiner Waldorf School

“Education is what is left when you have forgotten what you learnt!”

Steiner Waldorf Student

“This education has given me the courage to chose the unchartered path into life.”

Steiner Waldorf Student

What to expect in the Middle School ...

If you are looking for a short introduction to the Middle School years from Class 6 to Class 8 (pupils aged 12-14), we hope this will be a starting point for you. Whether you are visiting us for an Open Day, have a child in the Lower School or are looking for an alternative schooling, this booklet aims to answer a few of your questions and give you a picture of life in the Middle School at Michael Hall.

We are happy to answer any further questions you may have, and look forward to welcoming you in the Middle School!

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An Overview of Each Year Group and Their Development

The Class 6 Child: Looking for justice and developing the inner life

Children in Class 6 stand at the beginning of the journey through adolescence to young adulthood. Limbs grow longer, bodies stronger and heavier and minds become sharper. Class 6 pupils want to experience the world and make it their own, while concepts such as justice and loyalty are fiercely debated. Pupils are ready for a new kind of teaching, for new subjects, and they want and need teachers who can be matter-of-fact, clear and, above all, fair.

Although students will still find delight in beautiful things, it is the tools of a trade that hold a special fascination as the light of conceptual thinking dawns for them. Touching and holding the physical earth will enable an eager geologist to discover the secrets of earth's minerals. The phenomena of acoustics, heat, magnetism and optics are explored through concrete application and experimentation. The culture of Ancient Rome is studied, with its emphasis on practical technology and law, and later on the study of the Middle Ages provides an insight into the development of the human inner world, which the pupils themselves are becoming more aware of every day. Mid-year in Class 6, the teachers have the task of facilitating this shift, supporting and inspiring a group that includes both children who are physically and emotionally still in childhood and those who have already moved into a new phase, one characterised by the physical changes of puberty and a more wary, self-sufficient attitude.

Main Lessons include: Ancient Rome, The Middle Ages, Physics, Drama, Geology, European Geography, Geometry and Business Maths.

Sample timetable Class 6

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lesson 1 08:15-09:05	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson
Lesson 2 09:10-10:10	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson
Break 10:10-10:35					
Lesson 3 10:40-11:30	Numeracy	Outdoor Education	Recorders	Eurythmy	Eurythmy
Lesson 4 11:35-12:25	Literacy	German	Wellbeing	Choir	Gym
Lunch 12:30-13:20					
Lesson 5 13:25-14:15	Art./Woodwork	Numeracy	German	Numeracy	French
Lesson 6 14:20-15:10	Gym	Handwork	Woodwork/Art	Literacy	Orchestra





The Class 7: On a journey of exploration and discovery

“The Age of Discovery” is the watchword for Class 7. The pupils are outwardly active, with a hunger for learning about the world and a yearning for independence. At the same time, physical and psychological stirrings can create bursts of energy or subdued introspection. It is a tremendous time for both outer and inner learning.

For the Class 7 teacher, it is a bit like being the captain of a ship: the captain is responsible for steering the crew on an incredible journey through stormy waters and becalmed seas, following the lode star of the individual potential of each child at the same time as building a sense of community and social responsibility.

This metaphorical journey enables the children to explore rich new veins: the geography of the world, the lives of fabled discoverers, poetry, what is healthy for human life and the life of the planet; to unveil the mysteries of chemistry and physics, to experience the richness of the Renaissance and to learn about the Northern Reformation. A teacher is no longer bound to sequential narrative, but can begin to introduce a topic or biography connected to the curriculum content with a symptom, a characteristic scene or event that speaks to the essence of a person’s life and striving. The use of biography enables the pupils to gain insights about their own struggles and explorations by hearing and working on the lives of others who can provide inspiration and example.

Main Lessons include:

The Italian Renaissance, The Northern Reformation, Creative Writing, Physics and Chemistry, Astronomy, The Age of Exploration and Discovery, World Geography, Health and Hygiene, Astronomy and Algebra.

Sample timetable Class 7

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lesson 1 08:15-09:05	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson
Lesson 2 09:10-10:10	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson
Break 10:10-10:35					
Lesson 3 10:40-11:30	Numeracy	Wellbeing	Outdoor Education	Art/Woodwork	Literacy
Lesson 4 11:35-12:25	Choir	Woodwork/Handwork	German	Spanish	German
Lunch 12:30-13:20					
Lesson 5 13:25-14:15	Gym	Recorders	Eurythmy	Numeracy	Gym
Lesson 6 14:20-15:10	Literacy	Spanish	Numeracy	Handwork/Art	Orchestra

The Class 8 Child: Looking out into the world

Class 8 pupils begin to have a broader outlook than before, developing a passion against injustice and an ability to stand back and gain perspective - both fruits of an increasingly independent outlook. History lessons focus on the struggle for freedom, equality and brotherhood, examining the revolutions that took place in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the world wars of the 20th century. Often, students explore the lives of iconic figures who epitomise their time and offer inspiration, or warning, to ours. Geography is considered from a world perspective, connections are made to the life of the present, and contemporary events are discussed with a striving to see the relationship between human attitudes and what occurs in the world.

Class 8 pupils are given four major projects during the year - a personal project, a full length play to be performed in public, the design and maintenance of a class garden, and a challenging class trip. The personal project spans several months, allowing the pupils to learn a new skill, which they write about and present to an audience. In their play, the pupils work as a team and gain confidence through an artistic process. The qualities of teamwork, persistence and consequentiality are further developed in the gardening project. Class 8 trips usually involve physical challenges such as abseiling, high ropes or white-water rafting - tests of courage which give a great sense of achievement once met and fulfilled.

Main Lessons include: History - The Age of Revolutions, World Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Physiology, Drama, Meteorology and Platonic Solids.

Sample timetable Class 8

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lesson 1 08:15-09:05	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson
Lesson 2 09:10-10:10	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson	Main Lesson
Break 10:10-10:35					
Lesson 3 10:40-11:30	German	Literacy	Numeracy	Eurythmy	Numeracy
Lesson 4 11:35-12:25	Extra Main Lesson	Wellbeing	Art./Woodwork	Outdoors	Science
Lunch 12:30-13:20					
Lesson 5 13:25-14:15	Literacy	German	Gym	Woodwork/Art	Spanish
Lesson 6 14:20-15:10	Numeracy	Gym	Spanish	Choir	Orchestra



Middle School FAQs

What is a Main Lesson?

In the course of a school year there will be between 10 and 12 Main Lesson blocks, taught by the Class Teacher where an age-appropriate theme will be developed over a period of 3 to 4 weeks. Main Lesson themes include subjects that meet the needs of the child based on an understanding of child development. The Main Lesson is made up of three parts: a rhythmic part where music, movement, recitation and games are learnt; a second period of absorbing new content and re-elaborating what has already been learnt; and thirdly, a task or assignment involving written bookwork, drawing and mathematical practice. (Full Main Lesson Chart on the back page).

What is the major difference between the Lower School and the Middle School?

Apart from the change of building, Middle School pupils are developing the capacity to understand cause and effect, and this new ability is addressed both in the curriculum and in the expectations regarding learning and behaviour.

Will there be more academic focus in the Middle School?

The development of solid skills in English and Maths, the Sciences, Languages, Geography and History is very much part of the Middle School focus, and enables pupils to begin their GCSE tasks in Class 9 with confidence.

How does the curriculum meet the stage of development in the Middle School?

Middle School pupils are entering into puberty and adolescence, and their newly acquired critical faculty is met by the introduction of exact observation in the sciences and the transition from myth to history.

Is the timetable similar to the Lower School?

Yes, in that there are 8 periods in the day, with Main Lesson taking place in the first 2 periods every day.

Are there new subjects in the Middle School?

English and Maths are now taught as subjects, there is a choice of 3 languages in Class 7, there is a Middle School Orchestra and Gardening. ICT and Joinery are introduced in Class 8.

What are the expectations of Middle School pupils?

Middle School pupils are expected to respect the school work ethos, to show respect for teachers, peers and visitors and to behave with consideration to others at all times, showing tolerance and acceptance of difference.

How do teachers effect a smooth transition from Lower School to Middle School?

The experience of moving from a building where the pupils are the oldest, biggest and most experienced to another where everyone is older, more knowledgeable and bigger than you. Both the Class Teachers and the Subject Teachers guide the transition process in a sensitive manner, gradually encouraging independence in such a way that the children feel comfortable both socially and in their work.

How do teachers effect a smooth transition from Middle School to Upper School?

In Class 8 there are several milestones towards independent learning: these include a major personal project, a Class Play and a Class Trip. All of these require the stamina, creativity and social interaction which will prepare the pupils for the Upper School. Social, practical, academic and artistic skills are brought to a culmination which can then diversify in the choices available in the Upper School.

Will pupils be ready for GCSEs at the beginning of Class 9?

The GCSE courses run for almost two years, and during that time the academic skills required will be honed in order to enable students to achieve good results; in Class 8, for instance, various skills in essay writing are developed, scientific thinking is encouraged

and a broad range of mathematical skills is worked on.

Is there streaming in the Middle School?

One of the key Steiner-Waldorf principles is the value of groups of mixed ability, and difference of ability is met by differentiation for pupils with learning differences or those who are gifted and talented.

What happens with languages in the Middle School?

In Class 6, the pupils are given a taste of Spanish, and in Class 7 pupils can choose 2 of 3 languages: Spanish, French and German.

How are the Sciences taught in the Middle School?

Pupils require teachers to have a more objective orientation in the Middle School. Science lessons begin as the children gain the ability to see the world causally and they need to develop the emerging critical thinking faculty. Initially an emotional connection to the phenomena will be awakened before the intrinsic qualities can be grasped in cognitive activity.

When do pupils start using computers?

ICT is introduced in Class 8.

Are there additional sports in the Middle School?

As well as basketball, handball, hockey, rugby and orienteering there are various after-school clubs available for Middle School pupils.

What musical provision is there in the Middle School?

Music and singing are weekly subjects, as is the Middle School Orchestra. Pupils can have private tuition during school time on their chosen instrument (provided by Peri Teachers), and these lessons work on a rotational basis in order not to miss the same lesson in the timetable. There are opportunities to play for performances, ensemble groups, festivals where music is played and sometimes performances of musicals.

Do the school rules change in the Middle School?

Now that the children have gained an understanding of cause and effect, consequences regarding behaviour are immediate and the pupils are required to take more responsibility for their actions. Sanctions reflect the need for a more serious attitude to both work and social relationships.

Are exchanges encouraged?

Yes, if they take place in Class 7; Class 6 pupils are generally not emotionally ready for an exchange, and the Class 8 programme would be compromised by pupils missing part of the year. These exchanges are subject to all safeguarding requirements being met to the School's satisfaction.

What sort of learning support is offered in the Middle School?

Pupils with some learning differences continue to receive one-to-one support on a weekly basis, whereas pupils with other learning differences may be offered periodical lessons, either one-to-one or in a group. Other needs are met in the classroom by the class teacher, subject teachers and/or assistants.

How do teachers deal with puberty and adolescence?

Teachers should provide adolescents with new perspectives, directing their attention into the world in order to counterbalance the changes they are meeting in themselves. Pupils should be encouraged to take initiatives and challenge assumptions: they should be shown how to formulate their own ideas, and be inspired to exercise social responsibility.

How often can I expect to receive progress reports?

Parents receive a mid-year report and a more extensive end-of-year report from all the teachers of the class.

What is expected of parents in the Middle School?

Apart from regular attendance at parent evenings, supporting fund-raising activities and events, helping with Class Plays when required and contributing to the parent group, adolescents need firm boundaries and clear expectations. Providing adequate support for school work in the form of time and space for homework, a healthy routine, and maintaining a balanced social life are key factors in enabling a child to thrive at school.

What major events do I need to be aware of?

There is an annual Advent Festival of Music, usually a Class Play once a year, the Advent Fair around Christmas, the Talent Show in the autumn term and trips and outings. There is a Midsummer Festival in the summer term, Olympics food in Class 6 and Class Concerts. Class 8 students have a major project to prepare, a full production of a play, a Class Trip of one week, a Class Ball in the summer term and a leaving party for pupils, parents and teachers.

Is my Class Teacher still my main point of contact?

Yes, for any matter regarding your child and the class.

What happens in Parents' Evenings?

Generally, parents are given a picture of child development and how the curriculum relates to that; the teacher, and possibly the subject teachers, will share their experiences of the class and their expectations regarding learning. Parents will be given the opportunity to partake in discussions relevant to the class, and Class Contacts (representatives of the parent body) will bring information about the wider school events and fund-raising ideas and plans.

How often will I receive communications from the teachers and the school?

You will receive regular updates via email from the Class Teacher, and also receive communications from the Acting Principal or School Principal regarding faculty or whole-school matters. There is also a weekly Friday Flier, a communication which provides general information about the life of the school and up-and-coming events. There is a school website which gives comprehensive information about Michael Hall, and a Parent Handbook.

What do I do if I have a concern?

If you have a concern regarding your child's education or social life at school, please contact your child's Class Teacher to arrange a meeting or conversation. If, after speaking with your Class Teacher, you feel the issue is still unresolved, the Acting Principal is there to advise you and can be contacted by email to arrange a meeting or conversation.

What kind of support does the school expect of me as regards homework?

There may be times when your child is unable to do their homework; if this is the case, rather than do it for them, please inform the Class Teacher. There are also times when your child may ask for support or ideas. The important thing is to allow them to make a start themselves, in order to gain independence and engage in tasks with decreasing adult support. Time and space need to be provided, and a routine is recommended.

How much homework will my child receive in the Middle School?

This will vary according to the Main Lesson, and will increase as the pupils become older; homework will include Maths, English, Main Lesson and Languages. GCSE students can expect up to two hours homework at night, so Class 8 pupils need to get used to a substantial amount of time dedicated to homework.



Other useful information

Attendance

Attendance and punctuality at school is important for the balanced education and development of our children and we expect all children, who are fit and healthy, to attend school in term time, every day. We do all we can to encourage all children to attend and be punctual. A key factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and schooling both within school and the home, and to this end we strive to make our school a safe, happy and rewarding place of learning. Parents are asked to ensure that pupils arrive in school on time and not to take holidays during term time. The doors open at 8am and pupils are expected to be either at their places and ready to learn or (for the Upper School) in Registration ready to say the Morning Verse by 8.10am. Registration formally closes at 8.30am.

Clothing

Please make yourself aware of the Behaviour and School Rules Policy (which includes clothing Policy): <http://www.michaelhall.co.uk/policies>

Gym Clubs

For up-to-date Gym Clubs, please see our website or the Parent Portal.

Pupils may attend a Gym Club once a Consent Form has been completed. Gym Club Consent Forms can be completed on the Parent Portal (downloaded from the website or collected from Reception). Clubs are designed for children who want to commit and attend regularly.

Gym Kit for Middle School

Full Gym Kit information: <http://www.michaelhall.co.uk/gym-kits>

Homework Club

Homework Club is for children from Classes 1 - 8 and runs from 15:10 to 16:05 every day and is in place to support families for the following reasons:

- Staff children needing childcare
- Siblings waiting for older children to finish school
- Parents needing to meet with a teacher
- Children travelling by bus
- Emergencies

To book our Homework Club please visit the website or contact Receptions.

What our parents say about the Middle School

"My daughter started Michael Hall in her early teens. Within days we watched her sense of fun return along with her colour and smile. The makeup and attitude diminished and she stopped being so concerned with the peer group and started to play again with friends. The lessons really engaged her and the boisterously friendly atmosphere made learning fun. Steiner education at Michael Hall gave us back our daughter and a healthy community."

Parent

"Since taking my son (now age 14) out of mainstream education in 2012 and placing him at Michael Hall, he has blossomed and now has regained the love of learning he had when he was younger. The house move to do this was absolutely worth it. No regrets."

Parent

"The Anthroposophical and pedagogical insight of the two class teachers of my children, and my daughter's upper school Guardian at Michael Hall has been a source of real strength for me. To know that my children are being guided through their childhood with such wisdom, love and dedication is the best gift I am able to give them as a mother."

Parent

Pupils of Class 8

"I struggled a lot but I have grown through the support of my teachers and class mates."

"You are turning into an adult - enjoy every moment of these years!"

"Challenging to begin with but we learn a lot in the time - not only curriculum but how to do things!"

"Tough but great!"

"A lot of emotional changes - hardship and achievement."

"Class 8 is the best year so far!"



Class 6 Dress rehearsal of the play Parzival

Class 7, making a lime kiln



Class 8 students in a woodwork lesson

