



Michael Oak
Waldorf School

Michael Oak

HIGH SCHOOL PROSPECTUS



“Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings, who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives. The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility – these three forces are the very nerve of education.” – Rudolf Steiner



Gees Week Victory Pose



Class 10 Orange River Camp

Welcome to Michael Oak

At Michael Oak, a private Waldorf school in Cape Town, we believe the prime focus of education is to prepare students for life – guiding them to discover who they are and how they want to contribute to the world. In today's hurried times, we offer a meaningful foundation that helps young people grow into confident, capable and critical-thinking adults.

Situated on a beautiful, tree-filled campus in Kenilworth, our school provides a calm, nurturing space just minutes from public transport, combining accessibility with a strong connection to nature. Since our founding in 1962, Michael Oak has grown steadily into a vibrant community offering a full Waldorf education from nursery to matric.



Barn Dance



Break Time Bonding



Graduation Ceremony



Class 10 & Class 1 Buddies



Woodwork Lesson



Break Time In The Garden

Waldorf Education



High School Main Lesson Books

Main Lesson Book Covers

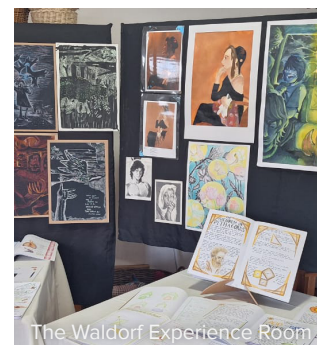
What Makes Waldorf Education Different?

While firmly rooted in our local South African context, this approach is truly global – part of a network of over 1,000 Waldorf schools in more than 60 countries on five continents. Inspired by the vision of Rudolf Steiner, we believe education is a lifelong journey that should be joyful, challenging and meaningful. It's not a race towards examinations or a matter of accumulating facts, but a path of curiosity, resilience, imagination, empathy, inner strength and moral insight. These are the qualities that serve students far beyond the classroom. Teachers are not simply instructors, but mentors and guides.

They often accompany the same class over several years. This continuity fosters trust, stability and profound learning relationships. With our small classes, each student is known and valued.

Waldorf education is a holistic response to the question: “How can education best serve the growth of the individual and of society?” It works from the inside out, recognising that each student arrives with innate potential and purpose. The role of the teacher is not to mould the student to fit an external system, but to awaken what already lives within. Learning is not imposed, but evoked, through a living curriculum that engages the whole human being.

Grounded in a comprehensive understanding of human development, our rich, unique curriculum unfolds in rhythm with the evolving needs and capacities of adolescence. We meet each grade with developmentally aligned material that weaves academic rigour into a broader tapestry of storytelling, music, visual arts, drama, crafts, movement and nature-based experiences. These deepen and secure the strengths of every student, preparing them to find direction in their lives.



The Waldorf Experience Room

The role of the teacher is not to mould the student to fit an external system, but to awaken what already lives within.

The strength of Waldorf high school education lies in its interdisciplinary approach, academic rigour and active learning process. Core subjects are introduced through concentrated lesson blocks that allow for sustained focus and depth. Instead of relying on rote memorisation or standardised textbooks, students create their own beautiful, content-rich Main Lesson books, which integrate conceptual, artistic, practical and reflective work. They are also formally assessed through research projects, essays and tests.



Art Lesson



Garden Art

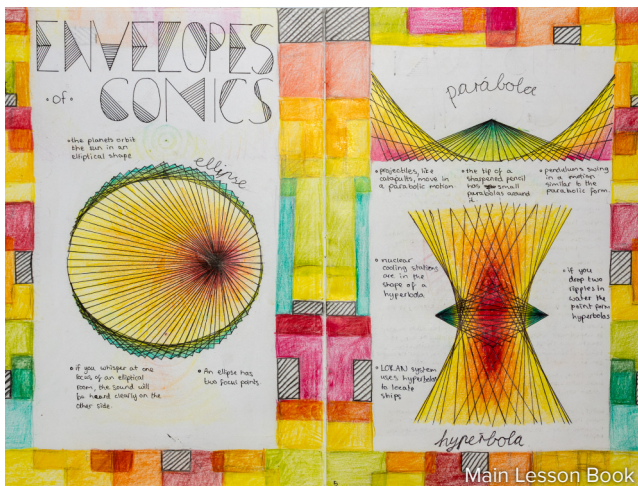


Student



Lesson In Progress

Curriculum



Main Lesson Book



Student



Student Collaboration & Teamwork

Learning Through Life Stages

The high school years are marked by a growing emphasis on critical thinking, self-discipline and social awareness. From Class 8 to Class 13, the curriculum evolves in step with students' physical, emotional and intellectual development. Each grade includes meaningful rites of passage, in which every student participates, cultivating a shared sense of purpose and engagement. We inspire learners to explore, observe and research independently to develop a deeper understanding of the world.

Compulsory Subjects

- Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy
- Life Orientation
- Afrikaans First Additional Language
- English Home Language
- Electives
- Life Sciences
- Dramatic Arts
- Physical Sciences
- Visual Arts
- Geography
- History
- Computer Applications Technology

Class 9: Exploring Polarities

At this stage, students grapple with the world's contrasts: light and dark, reason and emotion, self and other. The curriculum reflects these polarities through scientific studies in electricity, geometry and organic chemistry, where opposites are clearly defined. In the humanities, we look at revolutions and Romantic poetry. In biology, we study the vital organs and Steiner's twelve senses, which explores good health and deepens self knowledge. A full Shakespeare play deepens expressive confidence, collaboration and understanding of the human experience.

Class 8: Laying Foundations

The transition into high school is marked by themes of structure, balance and discovery. Algebra introduces abstract reasoning; mechanics and skeletal biology reveal physical structure; geology and the Industrial Revolution explore deep time and societal change; while the poetic and dramatic arts develop expressiveness. A major personal research project encourages early independence and initiative.

Throughout the year, careful guidance supports students as they adapt to increased academic expectations and a wider learning environment. Emphasis is placed on developing confidence, organisational skills and a growing sense of responsibility.



Class 11: Ideals and Inquiry

As they approach adulthood, students explore questions of purpose, morality and identity. Scientific studies – astronomy, atomic theory, cell biology and genetics – encourage inquiry into the nature of life, matter and the human being's place in the universe. The Parzival epic is explored as a mirror for the journey from naïveté to mature compassion, supporting reflection on inner growth and moral awareness. A social outreach placement further develops empathy and awareness, while job-shadowing connects them to the world of work.

Class 10: Seeking Balance and Perspective

As students grow in self-awareness and maturity, they explore themes of harmony and human development. The curriculum includes the Renaissance, ancient civilisations, meteorology, motion mechanics, trigonometry and embryology. Staging a Greek drama deepens understanding of balance between individual and chorus. A Roots, Hearts and Wings Adventure marks greater independence. Together, these experiences encourage students to think critically, act responsibly, and step forward with confidence into the wider world.

Class 13: Achievement and Transition

This bridging year focuses on the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Matric exams and preparation for tertiary study. Having completed the full 12-year Waldorf curriculum, students enter Class 13 with maturity and confidence. Our NSC results consistently rank among the top in the Western Cape, with a 100% pass rate and 99% Bachelor-level endorsements.

Class 12: Integration and Purpose

The final year of the Waldorf curriculum is a time of synthesis of all students have learned and discovered about themselves. Each student undertakes a substantial independent project, exploring a self-chosen topic through sustained research or creative work, and presents their findings to the school community. Academic studies explore complex themes such as evolution, Goethe's colour theory, and the philosophical questions raised by quantum physics. A major class play crowns the year.



“The basis of artistic creation is not what is, but what might be; not the real, but the possible.”

– Rudolf Steiner

Crafts

Sewing, embroidery, knitting, woodwork, basketry, spinning, weaving, bookbinding, ceramics and mosaic.

Outdoor Education

Field trips deepen learning and build connection to the natural world.

Eurythmy

A movement art blending music and gesture, requiring individual mastery and sensitivity to the group.

Art

Drawing, painting, sculpture, design.

Music

Singing and ensemble performance.

Practical Arts

Nutrition, gardening and computer applications technology.

Visual arts enhance spatial reasoning, performance arts build memory and confidence, and craft work cultivates fine motor skills, attention to detail and design – all of which support scientific and technical tasks. Woodworking and textile arts also strengthen planning, perseverance and problem-solving – skills directly transferable to mathematics, sciences and writing.

As students navigate complex challenges in their long-term craft projects, they

sharpen process thinking and gain a sense of accomplishment that bolsters intrinsic motivation. Moreover, participation in these disciplines supports collaboration, time management, emotional resilience and self-assertion, as well as self-expression in multiple mediums.

In high school, artistic and practical disciplines strengthen students’ academic engagement by building their ability to think in multiple dimensions.



Artwork on Display

Daily Life At Michael Oak

Main Lesson (8:00–10:00)	The day begins with an in-depth two-hour lesson on a single subject (e.g. astronomy, chemistry, literature, history) explored over a 3–4-week block.
Running Lessons	45-minute subject periods follow the Main Lesson, and include mathematics, languages, visual arts, handwork, woodwork and Eurythmy.
After-School Activities	Students take part in seasonal sports as well as a variety of interest groups like chess, marimba, coding, outreach, dance, choir and more.
Weekly Assemblies	Every Monday begins with a high school assembly that includes music, guest speakers and time to reflect and celebrate in community.
Practical Activities	Running lessons are interspersed with practical activities such as crafts and drama.

Student Support and Mentorship



“The heart of the Waldorf method is that education is an art – it must speak to the (student’s) experience. To educate the whole (student), (the) heart and (the) will must be reached, as well as the mind.” – Rudolf Steiner

Adolescence is a time of rapid growth and change. At Michael Oak, we provide intentional support structures to help students navigate this journey.

Each high school class has a Class Guardian, who acts as an academic mentor, emotional guide and liaison with parents. They meet regularly with students, monitor progress and guide class meetings and camps. Subject teachers also develop strong connections with students over time.

In addition, Michael Oak has a full-time school counsellor available on campus. We strive to maintain an open, respectful school culture where each student can thrive.

Management



High School Building

High School Forum

The High School Forum is a parent discussion group that supports the Faculty and promotes understanding of the Waldorf approach. It meets once a term and includes representatives from each class.

Student Forum

The Student Forum is a democratically elected student body from each class that initiates clubs, events and outreach projects, represents student voices on the Faculty and helps promote school activities.

High School Faculty

The High School Faculty meets weekly to manage planning, assessments, teacher training, discipline and student support, with regular input from parents and professionals.

College of Teachers

The College of Teachers oversees the school's educational direction and leadership, functioning as a shared principal body.

Frequently Asked Questions

Academics



Basketball During Break

How academically rigorous is Michael Oak compared to mainstream schools?

Our internationally recognised Waldorf curriculum offers a breadth of subjects that surpasses conventional options. Apart from standard CAPS subjects, every high school student will study astronomy, ancient and medieval literature, basic economics, conic sections, drama, history of art, music and architecture, philosophy, platonic solids, projective geometry and surveying. While aligned with national standards, the pacing and delivery are adapted purposely to emphasise depth over early specialisation. Students complete the South African National Senior Certificate (NSC) in Class 13.

What role do the arts and practical subjects play in the curriculum?

A central one. These are core activities, not extras, and provide a balance to academic learning. Through them, students develop creativity, coordination, perseverance, dexterity and aesthetic awareness.

When do students begin preparing for matric?

Formal matric preparation begins in Term 4 of Class 12. Until then, students complete the full Waldorf curriculum, which lays a solid foundation before focusing on exams in Class 13. The CAPS curriculum is followed in all the senior classes.

What is Michael Oak's approach to technology?

High school students learn to use technology in guided IT lessons as a tool to support and enhance their education, not as a replacement for human interaction. They develop digital literacy through research, presentations and projects in areas such as graphic design, music production, photography and engineering.



Gees Week Fashion Show

Assessment and Learning Support

Are students well-prepared for tertiary studies?

Yes. Our students consistently achieve excellent matric results and are accepted into top tertiary institutions in South Africa and abroad. The Waldorf curriculum emphasises self-directed learning, communication skills, project planning, critical thinking and creativity – all of which are essential at university level and in the workplace.

How do tests and examinations work?

Students are assessed continuously and holistically through tests, projects, oral presentations, practical work and their Main Lesson books. Reports are issued each term for Classes 8–12, with a focus on meaningful learning as well as marks in academic subjects. Formal examinations are only introduced in the middle of Class 12 to preserve learning time.

How do you support diverse learning needs?

The school provides tailored academic support, including extra mathematics classes, faculty monitoring and community spaces like the Neurodiversity Club, helping all learners to succeed and feel included.

Don't late subject choices limit career options or university readiness?

Late subject choice is designed to allow students to explore broadly and make mature decisions. The school provides guidance to help students select appropriate subjects aligned with their career goals and university requirements.



Our Land by Jaidev Patel

Is there homework?

Yes, especially in the senior years. Homework includes reading, research, consolidation of classwork and projects. It helps students develop time management, personal responsibility and study skills.

What importance is given to the sciences?

Michael Oak includes a full complement of academic subjects, including both physical and biological sciences and mathematics, following the national curriculum. STEM subjects incorporate practical, hands-on learning and creative elements to build deep understanding, not just rote learning. Biographies of key scientists provide real-world context and inspiration.

Student Development and Leadership

How does Michael Oak promote leadership?

The entire Waldorf approach builds confidence and communication skills, preparing students to lead with integrity in real-world settings. Leadership is developed organically through responsibility and self-awareness. Students take the lead in projects, performances, mentorship roles and community activities. By the senior years, they assume increasing ownership over their learning. They also have the opportunity to lead the Student Forum.



Disconnected by Amarah Edwards

How is discipline handled?

Discipline is relational and based on mutual respect and accountability. Students sign a Code of Conduct that outlines their rights and responsibilities, and are guided to develop their inward sense of duty. Behavioural issues are addressed through dialogue, mentorship and restorative processes that aim to facilitate growth rather than impose control.

What extracurricular activities are offered?

Students can participate in a variety of sports and special interest groups, such as basketball, table tennis, volleyball, soccer, handball, chess, coding, dance, marimba band, drama and more.

Are international exchanges available?

Yes. Students in Class 10 or 11 can apply for exchange programmes at other Waldorf schools around the world, broadening their horizons and enriching their global understanding.



High School Michaelmas Celebration

School Environment

Is Michael Oak a religious school?

No. We are non-denominational and inclusive. Waldorf education includes a spiritual dimension based on reverence for life, human dignity and the development of moral insight, but it does not promote any specific religion. We celebrate festivals and stories from diverse cultures in a universal, human-centred way.

How big are the classes?

There is only one class per grade, which typically ranges from 18 to 25 students, allowing for individual attention and strong peer relationships.

Will my child fit in if they are not arty?

Michael Oak values diversity and individuality. While it has a reputation for creativity and alternative education, students with a range of interests and personalities thrive.

Do students from non-Waldorf schools adjust easily?

Absolutely. Many students join us from mainstream schools and transition well.

Financial Support

What if I can't afford the fees?

Limited bursaries and fee assistance are offered based on financial need and available resources. Families may enquire through the school office for application details. As an independent school and not-for-profit organisation, Michael Oak receives no government funding and relies entirely on school fees to operate. The majority of these funds go directly towards teacher salaries and the daily running of the school.

Admission Steps

Tours

We offer the following opportunities to learn more about the school.

- Join a school tour (usually available on Tuesday or Thursday mornings).
- Attend an Open Classroom event (twice per term).
- Attend an Open Day (twice per year).

Application

- Complete the online application under the admissions tab on our website.
- Submit all supporting documents.

Interview

- Once all application requirements have been met, including financial screening and a credit check, we will invite you and your child for an interview with the class guardian.

Acceptance and placement

- You will be notified of the outcome in writing.
- A non-refundable placement fee of R3,500 is required should you accept the placement.
- A signed the parent contract is required to finalise enrolment.

Applications are open year-round, but early applications are advised to avoid disappointment.