

Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Linden Lodge School
Date of previous visit	06.07.22
Date of this visit	03.10.22
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	14.00
Visit Supported by	Jhenni Izquierdo

About the Independent Visitor

Visiting the residential provision today is Mark Goode. Mark has worked in the Education sector for the past 24 years, leading in multiple schools and alternative providers with experience as both Headteacher and Executive Headteacher. Mark spent time as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors with OFSTED. Mark is experienced in leading bespoke education covering ages 4 to 19 across the full academic range for pupils with wide-ranging complex additional, special and health needs. Mark's strong track-record of inspection processes has helped organisations with low ratings, as well as both 'Good' and 'Outstanding' ratings. Mark undertakes visits on behalf of Platinum Care Consultancy in a number of residential School settings. These include settings designated for care and education of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, learning difficulties, sensory impairment, physical disabilities and health conditions.

Standard 3 Visits

INTRODUCTION: Standard 3 - Monitoring by Independent Visitors (as of 5th September 2022).

3.1 The Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school appoint a representative who is independent of the leadership and management of the school to visit the residential provision six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. The representative is vetted in line with the school's safe recruitment policy, in accordance with the safer recruitment requirements set out in Keeping children safe in education, and has the skills and authority to effectively carry out this role

3.2 Monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:

- **conversations with children, the senior management team and staff;**

- conversations with social workers where relevant;
- conversations with parents/carers where relevant;
- checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, bullying, restraint (including restrictive interventions), risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children including in relation to residential provision;
- evaluation of the quality of the provision and effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded;
- assessment of the suitability and physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the residential provision and the external environment.

3.3 Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the headteacher (or school equivalent) and where applicable the Governing Body, trust, or proprietor.

- Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body) within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. The Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school should record a formal response to each written report.
- Monitoring reports and formal responses should be retained by the school and made available during an inspection and, on request, shared with any placing authorities and with the local authority where the school is located.

3.4 The headteacher (or school equivalent), Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor carry out, and record in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for residential pupils, in relation to:

- its Statement of Purpose;
- its staffing policy;
- the placement plans for individual children; and
- an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards and
- actions it will undertake to ensure compliance.

There is also an intention to review other thematic areas in discussion with the school:

- The evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded.
- An assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture, and equipment of the School.

During visits opportunities are also taken to:

- Provide opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet me (in private if they wish).
- Carry out observations of the care provided, or systems being used.

Introduction and Context for this visit

Linden Lodge is a day and residential Special Needs School for pupils with Vision and Sensory Impairment. It occupies a 3-acre campus close to the centre of London and has a range of specialist departments. The school currently has a roll of 144 pupils having fallen slightly from 146 at the time of the last Standard 20 visit in term 6 of last academic year. The school has seen a significant change in the overall leadership of the school since the end of 2021-22 with the retirement of the previous Headteacher and the appointment of two new Co-Headteachers for Education and Boarding respectively. As this was the first Standard 3 visit under the new National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, I spent time with the Co-Headteacher with responsibility for Boarding and the Head of Care in a catch-up around context that was extremely useful. With a new leadership structure in place it was very helpful to cover ground related to new boarders, referral and introduction processes. It was explained to me that there are a number of suitability assessments currently taking place for prospective boarders. This then leads on to the initial assessment stage prior to admission. These assessments are incremental in detail to ensure the greatest chance of an appropriate placement taking place. This therefore is designed to match the holistic needs of the boarders and their family

circumstances as closely as possible, thereby ensuring that placements have the greatest chance of success and the most comprehensive meeting of needs that can be arranged.

Local Authority contact follows after this process when the school feels that they already know that the placement can work. This process was cited high quality by a social worker during consultation during the last Standard 20 visit in July 2022 when I undertook a consultation. This relationship with Local Authority placement teams is a strong and mutually supportive one, and leads to a feeling that the bond is a hub for sharing of information for all stakeholders prior, during, and after placements at Linden Lodge. Clear goals and high standards are indicative of all aspects of this process. The Head of Care and the Co-Headteacher for boarding are aligned in this completely. This working relationship is new, but is an important feature of the leadership at Linden Lodge and has certainly made a strong start. It was explained that the new Co-Headteacher for Boarding has spent time staying over as part of boarding to experience the provision as staff and boarders do, and this has been appreciated by the Head of Care and other staff. This has led to identifying the need for, and implementing some changes. Chief in this has been the need for a central staff room in boarding to help staff well-being generally (which is certainly a priority for the leaders), but also to act as a central place for information sharing. This was formerly a large office for the Head of Care. Other adaptations that are likely include moves to increase independence in boarders at mealtimes where possible, and attempting to move towards young people sitting together at mealtimes, encouraging further independence and interaction.

This discussion explored recent challenges in staffing, and the fact that this is a national problem for the care sector. The leaders did however state that staff have been supportive in terms of helping coverage of boarding during periods of short-staffing. There is an ongoing recruitment drive taking place with a focus of trying to bring in more external staff that have the skills needed for boarding. Education staff supporting boarding has been a welcome feature recently as they have pre-existing knowledge about the boarders and have shown a willingness to work extra time. This has seen benefits to both boarding and school processes and relationships. The boarding provision has therefore remained sufficiently staffed and have not had to send anyone home, although it was stated that there have been times when the upper two floors have had shared evening time together, in part for staffing reasons, although this has led to benefits in terms of boarders' social developments.

The Head of Care and Co-Headteacher of School also explained the fact that in recent staff INSET, boarding staff were able to attend for the first time since the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic with a return to face to face training. There was a buzz about this training and the staff were energised by it. This included internal staff sharing a wealth of knowledge that showcases the expertise that is held within the staff. It was my impression that this has felt missed, and staff were relieved to have experienced this.

The Head of Care explained to me that there are currently 18 boarders: 14 full time with 4 nights weekly and 4 with a flexible care plan who stay the same night weekly.. Since my last Standard 20 visit there have been 9 boarders leave in July, and there are 5 in the process of being introduced to boarding. I agreed to attempt to speak to two of these (please see consultation section of this report). The Head of Care explained that, since the start of this academic year, she now attends the Head of Departments meeting regularly, and we discussed the impact of boarding on academic results. This is covered in the consultations section of this report.

This is the first visit undertaken under the new standard 3 requirements, and the new minimum standards for boarding in special schools. As such, time was spent in this visit considering the requirements of this new standard, in particular the following was discussed:

I reinforced the fact that all visits are now required to be unannounced and requested that the Head of Care supply me, each term, with any dates that would not be suitable, for pragmatic reasons. The Head of Care stated that this would be done termly to ensure that there is a strong chance of all visits being well supported, but that deputising staff will always be available. In relation to the new Standard 3 requirements (points 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4) the following detail was discussed:

Regarding point 3.1 and the provision being visited by an appropriately appointed and vetted person six times a year, I checked with the Head of Care, that the work undertaken by Platinum Care meets the expectation of the school in this regard. The Head of Care stated that it was her view that that all aspects are suitably covered, but that this would be fully checked ahead of the second standard 3 visit in term 2. I shared my driving licence and received contact in the days following the visit to supply a few more details. I will also be supplying the original of my Driving Licence.

Regarding point 3.2, covering the range of the standard 3 visits, I discussed the reports supplied by Platinum with the Head of Care, and it was agreed that they are comprehensive in this area, and I explained how they have been updated alongside the new standards. This means that no mandatory areas are missed. In relation to consultations undertaken it was agreed that in each visit that any new parents will be spoken to about their experiences in all visits, as well as any staff or external stakeholders (such as social workers) that, in discussion in each visit, it is felt by either the Independent Visitor or school staff would be of benefit to the quality of the visits. On this occasion we agreed that new parents would be the priority and governors are likely to be prioritised in term 2.

Regarding point 3.3 and its requirements of the school in terms of the sharing of Standard 3 reports and the response from the Governing Body, the Head of Care informed me that all reports are shared with the Governing Body well within the timeframe required, unedited, and I explained that the report template has been updated to include a section for the Governing Body to record a formal response. There was felt to be no issue with meeting the requirement to share the reports by the stated deadline date of two weeks after visits, and it is my intention to undertake a check of the response in subsequent visits. It was also shared with me that all of my visits are available on the website once finalised. It was suggested that the response from Governors could also be included.

Regarding point 3.4 and its requirements to see an annual review of the boarding provision undertaken by an appropriate named person, it was explained to me that there are two new Governors that have been appointed to have oversight of the boarding provision, and the first visits are scheduled for before the October half term. We discussed the fact that recently there has been a degree of change in governance. There are termly meetings of the Governing Body, and it was suggested that this is a chance for all to see, and even record responses to the Standard 3 visits. The Head of Care offered to share the schedule for the Governors' meetings with the Independent Visitor.

Finally, in relation to the new requirements of a standard 3 visit, there was discussion concerning the wording of the section related to a requirement to record an evaluation of the 'quality of provision', and it was agreed that this will be recorded in the summary section for each visit. The reports are structured with the intention of providing a narrative that does exactly this and will enable an evaluative statement to be made each time.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response	Verification by Independent Visitor
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u> To identify a new link governor for the boarding provision and ensure that the requirements of the new National Minimum Standards are highlighted and responded to – especially regarding the new Standard 3.</p>	<p>Currently we are identifying possible candidates regarding a link governor for residential. We very much look forward to having a strong working and supportive relationship once in post. Residential Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and updated accordingly. Following new National Standards 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4</p>	<p>The appointment of 2 new governors has been confirmed in the Standard 3 visit of October 2022.</p>

<p>Leadership and Management To complete the intended work related to the boarding provision and action planning using the SCCIF.</p>	<p>The New National Standards and SCCIF will inform an action plan for residential.</p>	<p>In conversation with the Head of Care it transpires that the Statement of Purpose is the first step, and this is in process with Governors. The rest is to follow thereafter. It was recommended to consider the SOP as the first part in this process and share with the Independent Visitor in term 2.</p>
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How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

The Head of Care explained to me that there have been no incidents that have required referral to external support since the last Standard 20 visit. Further to this, there has been no impact on the high quality of safeguarding processes or awareness since the recent change in leadership.

There have been no changes to systems for alerting in any instances of concerns being raised. Safeguarding team meetings take place every Wednesday and this contains a holistic overview in terms of senior staffing (Behaviour, Safeguarding Team, Attendance). All leaders are made aware of any safeguarding concerns raised, and the duty DSL staff member reviews the concern. In the hours of residential care this is shared immediately with either the Head of Care or the Deputy to speed up the process of sharing with staff. This has the impact of speeding the process up, and as a result it remains my view that safeguarding practices are strong at Linden Lodge and I have no concerns.

Mandatory Areas

Topic	Comments
<p>Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 20.9</p>	<p>The Head of Care explained that there have again been no missing episodes and no exclusions since the last Standard 20 visit that took place in term 6 of last year.</p> <p>Attendance figures for this year to date for boarding students is running at 89.7% and the figure for the whole school is 83.57%. Unauthorised absence for the whole school is lower than last year's figure of 0.2%, whilst the whole school figure is 0.52%. Authorised absence for the whole school is currently 15.91%, with the boarding figure at 13.3%. (6.8% illness and 3.1% medical appointments). These statistics show that attendance is higher across the school when students are a part of the boarding provision.</p>
<p>Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3</p>	<p>The Head of Care explained that there have been no complaints received since the last Standard 20 visit. The parents that were spoken to were very clear about their experience of interactions with the boarding staff and that they could not be more satisfied. The boarders' long term interests are clearly central to the decisions that are made at Linden Lodge, and on at least one occasion this has led to a placement not proceeding. This parent was very clear that they felt that the Head of Care was 100% correct in the reasoning as it was solidly based in making sure the right decision was made, rather than the easy one. Given the detailed oversight that has been explained in relation to the process for the beginning of placements it is hardly surprising.</p>

<p>Sanctions 20.6</p>	<p>The Head of Care confirmed that there have, once again, been no sanctions required or applied since the last Standard 20 visit. The Head of Care explained the circumstances around a student that began boarding in a fast-track process from the school day community and displayed a range of behaviours that were not suitable for the cohort in residence and were somewhat unexpected. There is to be an early annual review of the EHCP to ensure that needs can be met within the boarding provision. This is therefore not a sanction as it is being undertaken as a review of the appropriateness of boarding. The events show the importance of the process as explained in the context section when admitting new boarders.</p>
<p>Restraint (including restrictive interventions) 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7</p>	<p>During this Standard 3 visit the Head of Care explained that there have been no occasions when restrictive interventions have been used since my last visit. The detail covered in the induction processes overview illustrate the lengths that Linden Lodge go to in order to ensure placements are appropriate, meaning that the circumstances where a restrictive intervention is required are extremely unlikely in my view.</p>
<p>Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)</p>	<p>The Head of Care explained that all risk assessments are currently under review and being re-written to reflect the updated response to the Covid-19 position. These plans are of a high quality, but are updated at least annually (or as changes dictate the need to), and I was told that these will all be completed by the first half term of the year.</p> <p>I reviewed a sample of these reports that are in the process of being updated fully, and the documents have a very simple yet thorough format that makes the steps to take to minimise risk as much as possible very clear and easy to follow. Staff that work with boarders are therefore fully prepared to oversee the care in boarding.</p>
<p>Placement Plans 7.2</p>	<p>It was explained to me that, along with the Risk Assessments, the care plans are in the process of being updated. The plans are the product of an extensive process of individualised information gathering and regular update.</p> <p>The Head of Care shared a sample of the new plans with me, and I was able to conclude that these are impressive and simple in layout. A recently added snapshot summary of the key information required related to the boarder has helped make these very quick and easy to read. The feeling is one of preparedness to work with the young person very quickly. The Head of Care explained that all of these plans will be fully reviewed by the end of term 1 and I will be able to see more examples at this time.</p>

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

Since my last visit to the boarding provision in July there have been a number of adaptations to the boarding provision including the adaptation of a recreational space to create a computer play area for the Wii console and others.

In addition, the Head of Care showed me a dual purpose Gym in the main school that contained multiple soft play areas, and sunken trampolines that are very impressive. This facility is available to all school pupils in the daytime but becomes available to boarding in the evenings. Adjacent to it is an outdoor space that is being upgraded to be a multi-activity outdoor adventure play space on a large scale. This is to have many sensory uses including outdoor Gym play, climbing, sliding and swinging, and is a very exciting development for the school.

Boarders' rooms remain of a high standard and are well equipped, clean and personalised. The different floors remain bespoke to the boarders by the very fact that they have different categories of boarder in them, and are constantly adapted to meet individual as well as group needs.

Consultations Supporting this Visit.

Under Standard 3 this is stated as meaning that conversations with children, senior management team, staff and parents/carers and social workers, where relevant.

Walkaround all floors

During this visit I accompanied the Head of Care as she toured all floors, and I shared time with the boarders as they were beginning their evening activities. As this visit took place on a Monday afternoon, the evening began with a weekend catch up for all boarders and this was characterised by really warm interactions between staff and boarders.

One boarder that was undertaking his first evening was overtly happy and bubbly in his interactions with the staff team, which is a testament to the strength of the transition process. The personal circumstances of this boarder are such that this is a significant moment in their life, and yet it was clear that there was little anxiety and a great deal of excitement. This was a heart-warming thing to witness.

A second boarder was extremely warm in conversation with myself and the Head of Care related to playing Monopoly and the sense of humour on display, and the obvious affection for the staff team was a joy to see.

As stated in the context section, during this Standard 3 visit there were a few staff unwell, and as a result the floor were enjoying shared time with mixed floors. This is a response to some staffing issues but has been used to generate a really positive set of interactions that were impressive. In general, this consultation was characterised by young people being well supported by dedicated staff in a homely atmosphere.

Time Spent with the Co-Headteacher and Head of Care

During this Standard 3 visit I was able to spend a significant amount of time with these two leaders and we talked at length about the changing context of Linden Lodge, the changes in leadership generally, the addition of the new assigned governors, and their hopes for the future of Linden Lodge's boarding provision.

As part of this it was explained to me that the staff are keen to be able to demonstrate the impact of boarding in fresh ways and they shared examples of excerpts from newsletters. These showcased boarders' that were seeking election as Well-being representatives and acting as Eco Stem Ambassadors. These are strong pieces of evidence for the thriving interactions of these boarders. In addition, I reviewed poetry and examples of creative writing prepared by boarders. These are inspiring pieces of work and again showcase the impact boarding at Linden Lodge has upon boarders' confidence.

It was further explained that the Head of Care now attends the school-wide Head of Department meeting, and is actively engaged in discussion with the data leadership related to the statistical impact of boarding held in the school's exam results. The overall results for the school show that there are impressive %s of pupils making expected or better than expected progress in all categories. This is essentially a figure of 100% of all pupils, and it was explained that a significant proportion are boarders.

I recommended that a further conversation is held with the data team at the school as to how the exact figures related to boarders can be extracted from the raw and headline measures to showcase the successes in boarding. A consideration that may be worth looking into is reviewing progress from the point pupils begin

attending boarding, compared to progress when a day pupil. It was suggested that a second possible way forward would be to consider a case-study approach that could incorporate a range of these pieces of impact evidence for individuals. It may even be possible to include parent testimonials potentially as well.

Parent Consultation

As part of this Standard 3 visit I spoke at length to a sample of parents who have recently been involved in transition arrangements to boarding. A strength that was commented upon was the lengths that the Head of Care and boarding team have gone to in order to really understand the needs of potential boarders before they accessed boarding. This extended to seeking specialist support workers with very particular skills that are needed to support a boarder.

The parents sampled were equally full of praise related to the judgement of the staff related to when and even if boarding would be appropriate at any given time. The attempts made to support the boarders are appreciated. On one occasion this actually meant that boarding was not felt to be appropriate, but the process that was undertaken to seek the appropriate conditions for boarding was extremely exhaustive, and is considered to have been very helpful in the holistic care of the boarder in terms of making clear what sort of onward provision is appropriate.

Overall the consultation revealed that the parents called felt that the staff are extremely dedicated, honest and supportive. Praise could not have been higher.

Thematic Areas	
Standard/SCCIF Reference	Evidence / Observation
	None undertaken during this Standard 3 visit.

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision	
<p>This was a very positive visit that covered a lot of ground. I was pleased to spend time with the Head of Care and the Co-Headteacher for Boarding as they begin their work together in leading the next phase of development at Linden Lodge.</p> <p>In my view the quality of care is, and remains high. The leaders know the strengths and areas they wish to push ahead with developing, and I feel that they know which areas to focus on. I am looking forward to helping them in this journey as the year passes. I would like to thank everyone that I spent time with for their warm welcome and I am already looking forward to returning next term</p>	
Name: Mark Goode	Date: 10th October 2022

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Safeguarding</u> Ensure that the vetting checks for the Independent Visitor are updated and checked in line with the requirements of the new national minimum standards</p>	<p>Vetted checks have been completed following policy and Safer Recruitment guidelines. The next visit we shall ensure Mark’s original copy of his driving licence is photocopied and validated.</p>	<p>Term 2 2022-23</p>

<p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): How well children are helped and protected</u> Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children. Highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the home. When children are new to the home, any risks are well understood and are significantly reducing.</p>		
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u> To complete the alignment of the improvement plan for boarding with the SCCIF and NMS, and consider sharing it at the next Standard 3 visit.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The effectiveness of leaders and managers</u> Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.</p>	<p>The improvement plan for boarding is currently in process. Which will be available for sharing term 3.</p>	<p>Term 3 2022-23</p>
<p><u>Demonstrating the impact of boarding</u> Consider ways in which the impact of boarding upon the lives of those attending can be showcased to greatest effect.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The overall experiences and progress of children</u> There is significant evidence of change and improvement because of the excellent quality of care provided. The progress of children is exceptional, taking into account their starting points.</p>	<p>Young people’s progress is regularly monitored using various platforms and data. In the first instance we aim to use Tapestry as a form of evidencing young people’s progress in the form of case studies.</p>	<p>Term 3 2022-23</p>

Head of Residential Care’s Comments

A very pleasing report to read Mark has managed to capture some many positives. Whilst also showing how residential is constantly evolving and adapting to meeting young people’s needs. We are very proud of our young people’s achievements and constantly strive to build strong working relationships with parents. Which is shown within the report.

Name: *Izquierdo*

Date: 17/10/22

Head Teachers’ Comments

I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with Mark and reading his report. The report accurately reflects the individualised and specialised support and waking day curriculum that the young people receive at Richley House, Linden Lodge. We will continue to build on the outstanding successes of all of the young people at

Richley House through the continued positive links between education in school and the waking day curriculum at Richley House.

Name: Sarah Norris (electronically) 

Date: 31.10.2022

Formal Response from the Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school

Name:

Date: