



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Linden Lodge School
Date of previous visit	03/10/2022
Date of this visit	21/11/2022
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	13.45
Visit Supported by	Danny Sinclair – Head of Residential

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 roll has not changed significantly since my last visit. The overall leadership of the school continues to embed under the two Co-Head Teachers for Education and Boarding respectively. There has been a significant change in the oversight of the residential provision in that the Head of Residential at the time of my last Standard 3 visit in term 1 has since tendered resignation and departed on the Friday of the week prior to my arrival. I spent time in this visit discussing leadership arrangements with the Co-Headteacher responsible for the residential part of the school, the new Head of Residential, and Deputy Residential Childcare Manager. This was an extremely useful discussion and is covered in the consultation section of this report.

In this visit I was also able to discuss the arrangements in residential care with the recently appointed new governor with responsibility for this area of the school. She is also grandmother to a boarder, and as such this was a very helpful conversation. The details, once again, are contained in the consultation section of this report.

Staffing arrangements are in discussion at this time, and the Co-Headteacher informed me that one of the key areas is to create senior care workers responsible for each floor of the residential provision, in as much as there is a re-structure beginning following the departure of the previous Head of Residential.

It was explained to me that there are currently 18 boarders on roll: 14 that are in attendance regularly, and 2 who are currently not attending. One of these is too unwell to attend at present, and the other is in the process of being supported to move to an alternate provider as their needs could not be met. There is a full package of support in place alongside the referring local authority team, and I am fully satisfied that these steps are appropriate having had the details shared with me related to the events that have led to them.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response	Verification by Independent Visitor
<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>The Co-Headteacher has checked with Human Resources, who have confirmed that all checks have been undertaken in line with school processes.</p>	<p>During the visit, this was confirmed and the IV has offered to supply copies of his professional qualifications related to teaching and headship at the visit in term 3.</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>There is a working party that comprises members of the school, residential, health and therapy teams that is developing a plan of action around residential. There is also a connection with other local providers and an LA officer in development.</p>	<p>I discussed planning in the visit and suggested that use of the SCCIF to audit the provision and fine tune the areas to target in any action planning would be useful. This will therefore continue as a recommendation into term 3.</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>There are a number of areas under consideration in this regard and a number of methods that could be used; these include exam results, case studies for each pupil, the use of</p>	<p>The possible range of criteria to be used was discussed in the visit, and the residential leadership team are set to discuss this further in subsequent weeks. I will be</p>

tapestry and capturing PLGs that are used, or even a grab pack approach.

returning to this in term 3 during my next visit.

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

The new Head of Residential explained that there have been no issues that have required external support since my last Standard 3 visit in term 1. The Head of Residential is a fully trained DSL and is a member of the whole school safeguarding leadership team. As such, there is a rota for members of this team to be 'on-call' to respond to alerts in the 'My Concern' system. During my visit he received an alert and immediately dealt with it through contacting the parent of the young person, and through conversation initiated appropriate action. Whilst this was a day student, it was very clear that the system in place at the school, that includes the boarding provision, is a high quality one that enables all staff to undertake swift action to safeguard all pupils and boarders. As a result of my discussions, and in spite of the departure of the former Head of Residential, it is clear to me that safeguarding practices are strong at Linden Lodge and I have no concerns.

Mandatory Areas

Topic	Comments
Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 20.9	<p>The Head of Care explained that there have again been no missing episodes and no exclusions since the last Standard 3 visit that took place in term 1.</p> <p>Attendance figures for this year to date for boarding students is running at 87.9% and the figure for day pupils is 85.6%. Unauthorised absence for boarders is currently a very low 0.1%, and for day pupils it is 0.2%. Authorised absence figures are 12% for boarders and 14.1% for day students. In all cases the attendance figures are slightly more positive for boarders, indicating that boarding helps to increase attendance. It is also noteworthy that absence figures are slightly more positive than in term 1 when unauthorised absence for boarders was 0.2%, whilst the whole school figure was 0.52%. Authorised absence for the whole school was 15.91%, with the boarding figure at 13.3%. In general, therefore it can be seen that attendance has increased slightly between terms 1 and 2.</p>
Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3	<p>The Head of Residential explained that there have been no complaints received since the last Standard 3 visit. The parents that were spoken to in consultation were all full of praise for the residential staff, and commented that communication is a real strength. This makes it unlikely that complaints will arise. An example of this was explained during my visit, in the discussion that took place when a boarder missed Scouts as they were showering. This has led to an immediate change in processes, and staff being fully informed.</p>
Sanctions 20.6	<p>The Head of Residential informed me that there have, once again, been no sanctions required or applied since the last Standard 3 visit. It is his view that the nature of the boarders means that sanctions are not considered a relevant approach to take, and having spent time in the residential house in this visit, I whole-heartedly agree. The boarders' needs are such that relationships and positive interactions are the main priority and I witnessed this in action. Sanctions are therefore avoided through proactive discussion and planning strategies that involve the boarders in decisions and incorporate their views.</p>
Restraint (including restrictive interventions)	<p>The Head of Residential explained that there have been no occasions when restrictive interventions have been used since my last visit. The manner of the interactions that I witnessed is testament to the lengths to which staff go to in order to use the views</p>

20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7	of boarders in their plans, and I saw at first hand the warmth of these interactions. Discussion informs decisions and events, and as such boarders feel valued and respected, thus making the circumstances when a restrictive intervention may occur very unlikely.
Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)	<p>The Head of Residential informed me that there has been a need to make some adaptations to the environment risk assessments as there have been adjustments to the use of the 2nd and 3rd floor for boarders. The use of the buildings has changed in response to the numbers of boarders, to increase interaction and the feeling of community, and the adaptations have yet to be completed. The environment risk assessments are being updated presently and I will be able to view the results in my visit in term 3.</p> <p>The detail explained under placement plans below makes clear how proactive the staff use of the very strong systems is, and I have no concerns as a result.</p>
Placement Plans 7.2	The Head of Residential explained to me that placement plans are created upon entry in a very detailed fashion, based on a thorough induction and information gathering exercise. He went on to explain that information is then updated as needed and checked every day before the boarding session begins. This includes updates that can come from parents, health teams, therapy, education and boarding staff. I was shown a copy of the checklist used on a daily basis, and shared with staff. As such it is clear to me that coverage is comprehensive and plans are up to date and relevant.

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

Since my last visit to the boarding provision in October the upper two floors have been merged in terms of activities, and the Head of Residential showed me two new recreation spaces that have been created. These contain sensory stimulus materials, including computerised apparatus that supports a number of sensory apps. The boarders very much enjoy these spaces and this is a positive development. It was explained to me that one of the reasons for this is the fact that the lower floor has more space and enables joint activities to take place, and this has been undertaken after consultations with the young people.

The Head of Residential also demonstrated a label/pen mechanism that the boarders use that utilises a pre-programmed dot identification system to help them with independently accessing and using the premises. This is a very useful tool and helps a lot with independence.

Communal spaces are suitably furnished, clean and welcoming, and boarders' rooms remain of a high standard. They 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. As stated above, this has seen the upper two floors merged recently, and this is having the impact of increasing the community feeling, and this was lovely to see.

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.

(1). Extended Consultation with the Co-Headteacher, the Head and Deputy Head of Residential

Upon arrival I met with the three senior staff responsible for the boarding provision, who explained that the previous week had been the last week of the tenure of the previous Head of Residential, who had decided to leave the service under the terms of her contract. This had come as a surprise to some in the organisation, and was quite quick. This has led to consideration of the notice period required to ensure continuity of staffing in future. The new leadership structure comprises of the two former deputies in slightly reorganised roles, with one taking the mantle of the new Head of Residential, and the other becoming the Deputy. There is also, of course, the recently appointed Co-Head of Residential in post as well. I explored the capacity of this structure, and was informed that there is also a process ongoing to create Senior Care staff to complete a pyramid leadership structure. I am satisfied, based on these conversations, that there is sufficient capacity to maintain the high standards of care for the boarders. The Co-Headteacher and Deputy Head of Residential are both involved in shifts, and this has seen some adaptations to practices as well.

The discussion covered aspects that are included in this report in follow-up to the recommendations made in term 1, and the leadership team are considering ways of capturing the impact that boarding has for young people and families, as well as how to structure development plans around the current status, the use of the National Minimum Standards and an audit of the SCCIF. In discussion we covered various options, and I have agreed to support these discussions when I return in term 3. There is a sense of really looking forward, using the solid base that the Residential provision is built upon and focussing on further improvements.

(2). Consultation with boarders

During this visit I toured the two floors being used and was shown how this adaptation has created a real sense of community between what were two discreet floors until recently, and this is a positive development. I also sat in on the daily introduction meeting for boarders and discussed their days and feelings about boarding. The young people were happy to speak with me, and shared their feelings about boarding. They are a very positive group of young people that were able to express the fact that their interests are supported when boarding, and that they very much enjoy their time.

The Deputy Residential Childcare Manager was overseeing a team meeting with the boarders as well, in which the staff on site and the boarders attending were explained to the young people at the start of the evening shift. I witnessed the fact that all decisions about activities, feedback on events, and collective issues are openly discussed and subject to democratic votes between boarders. This was really heartening to see, and be a part of.

There was a real warmth between the staff and the boarders that illustrates how hard the staff work on relationships to underpin their work.

(3). Parent Consultations, targeted at a sample of parents of established boarders

During and after this visit I spoke to a sample of parents of boarders of young people that have been attending boarding for a prolonged period. The boarders that were concentrated upon have attended boarding for no less than three years. I was able to contact two sets of parents and their views are captured below:

Both sets of parents expressed the view that needs are well met at Linden Lodge, and that staff are extremely supportive to the young people in their care. One in particular expressed the view that the adaptations made by staff have been very important to their daughter in terms of making the boarding experience tailored to her particular needs in that she has autism and is also a very talented musician. The school enables this talent through supportive structures, lessons around school, and nurturing the talent through jamming with staff and entering competitions.

Both sets of parents spoken to felt that the support of the school has increased the levels of independence, and encouraged their children to make and keep friends that would otherwise not have been the case. In this it is clear the impact that boarding has been having upon the lives of the young people and their families over a prolonged period.

Both also spoke of the support offered by Linden Lodge in navigating dealings with Local Authority teams, and considering next steps for the young people. They spoke enthusiastically about the quality of communication, and the lengths that staff from Linden Lodge go to in order to keep families informed, including use of diaries and the tapestry set up, which gives a good insight into the achievements of the young people that they may otherwise not find out about.

Neither of the sets of parents spoken to had any concerns related to the provision at Linden Lodge, and one stated that the step into boarding was a big one for the family, but that it has always felt secure, and been the best thing for their daughter.

(4). Consultation with newly confirmed Governor with responsibility for Residential Care.

I spoke at length to the newly confirmed governor, who is the grandparent of a boarder that has been with Linden Lodge for a number of years. The post is a very recent one, and she confirmed that she had attended her first Governors’ meeting the previous evening. She stated that she was keen to represent the views of parents, represent and increase diversity, and raise the profile of boarding, whilst connecting the community to the school.

She expressed the fact that the departure of the previous Head of Residential had seemed quite sudden, but that she has confidence that the staff leading the operation are experienced and have been in post a long time. She stated that the systems in place and the continuity of the staff mean that the Residential Provision is in ‘safe hands’.

In terms of hopes for the future she stated that she is hoping to see the work of the Residential Team recognised more widely, and is looking to see greater numbers accessing the provision.

I reinforced the requirements under Standard 3 of the National Minimum Standards that mean that all governors need to provide a formal response to these reports and she responded that she would be making this a priority.

In general, I felt that the Governor is passionate about the importance of the role, and is keen to support the developments under the new leaders, that she is very supportive of, and feels are very approachable.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision
This was a visit that was built upon the surprise element of the change in the Head of Residential, and I have come away with a feeling that the solid base that is in place from her tenure is set to be built upon by the leaders of the Residential Provision with a renewed sense of purpose and focus. In this regard this was a very positive visit.

The conversations I have had, including the consultations with leaders, parents and the responsible governor, added to by the joyous comments from the boarders themselves, reinforces the view I held that care is of a high standard, and I would like to state that the determination of the staff to build upon the base they have has given me real confidence that standards will not only be maintained, but can improve further as this year passes.

The leaders are focussed on using the strengths and developing a defined path for improvement, and I am looking forward to supporting this process. I would like to thank everyone that I spent time with for their warm welcome, and I am already looking forward to coming back after what I hope will be a good Christmas for all.

Name: Mark Goode

Date:

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT

Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u> To ensure that the Governing Body's response to the Standard 3 reports is formally recorded and available at the next Standard 3 visit.</p> <p><u>National Minimum Standards 3.3</u> The governing body, trustees, or proprietor of the school should record a formal response to each written report.</p>	<p>We have shared the Standard 3 reports from Mark with our governing board and they have recorded a very positive response that has been added to the previous report and put onto the website.</p>	<p>Term 3 2022-23</p>
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u> To continue the work of refining the improvement plan for boarding alongside the SCCIF and NMS, considering completing a SCCIF audit.</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 Head of Residential has met with the Co-Headteacher responsible for residential and they have begun to create an action plan to review the SCCIF and NMS with a RAG rating to identify any areas that require improvement.</p>	<p>Term 3 2022-23</p>
<p><u>Demonstrating the impact of boarding</u> To further discuss and decide upon ways in which the impact of boarding upon the lives of those attending can be showcased to greatest effect, and make the viewing of these impacts easily viewable by external parties.</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</p>	<p>To continue to meet as a residential team to include the Head of Residential, Deputy Residential Childcare manager, and Co-Headteacher to review evidence in order to highlight all of the positive progress and independence achieved for our residential students over time.</p>	<p>Term 3 2022-23</p>

children is exceptional, taking into account their starting points		
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Head of Residential's Comments
<p>Thank you so much for your positive feedback in the report. I really appreciate the details you have included about areas we have developed.</p> <p>Thank you for the time you spent, with the young people, listening to their participation in the residential meeting.</p>
Name: Danny Sinclair
Date: 6.12.2022

Head Teachers' Comments
<p>It was so pleasing to read how well the young people were able to share their positive views of residential to an unfamiliar adult. It was rewarding to read within Mark's report how well the young people are looked after by a very experienced, knowledgeable and capable staff team within our residential provision.</p>
Name: Sarah Norris
Date: 6.12.2022

Formal Response from the Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school
<p>It is helpful to read this very positive and detailed report. Governors are pleased to see clear evidence of the care and commitment to the children at Richley House by staff there. The evidence of better outcomes for those children is a helpful reminder of that. Governors will ensure the recommendations of this report are included in our regular conversations with the Co-Headteachers and in the Governors meeting. In that way we will ensure those issues are attended too. It would be helpful if acronyms are fully explained when they are first used in the report.</p> <p>Congratulation to staff at Richley House for another positive report.</p>
Name: Kieran Travers and Rupert Marks. Co-chairs Linden Lodge Governors Board.
Date: 24.01.2023