



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Linden Lodge School
Date of previous visit	21/11/2022
Date of this visit	18/01/2023
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	13.00
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, and also related to the change noted in term 2 when the former Head of Residential had departed shortly beforehand. In this visit I spent extended time with the recently appointed Head and Deputy Head of Residential who have updated me related to recent staffing developments. This has included the appointment of a new administrator for residential, developments related to the recruitment of two senior care staff, and the recent appointment of an evening activities co-ordinator. We also discussed staff feedback and a possible process of staff voice being gathered. This is all covered in the consultations section of this report.

It was explained to me that there is one new boarder that has joined the provision since my last visit in term 2. The process of induction and transition that has taken place has seen this new boarder attending one evening per week owing to the commitment to other provisions in other parts of the week.

The number of boarders accessing the residential provision is currently 16. This is owing to one boarder leaving and one new boarder joining since my last visit. Three trial tea visits took place following afterschool clubs in order that familiarity was grown with other boarders and staff. I agreed to undertake consultation with a parent of this newly arrived boarder to explore induction processes and transition. I was also able to spend time discussing arrangements and support with a key member of the Therapy team in the shape of one of the Speech and Language Therapists. This is also covered in the consultations section.

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 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>The Governing Body response is recorded to the first Standard 3 of the year and is available on the Website.</p>	<p>I have reviewed this and the comments are presented by the Co-Headteacher in the report on the website.</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>There is a draft version completed that is due to be reviewed at the Governing Board meeting later this term. All members of the residential leadership team have contributed to this plan.</p>	<p>In the visit this was discussed, and by term 4 the CEO and MAT board will have had an input before this is agreed. I have offered to review the plan in the visit in term 4.</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>There is a sample case study being created related to one of the boarders to demonstrate the impact on their quality of life.</p>	<p>During the visit I explored this, and it is clear that the intention is to create a template for holding case studies that can then be used with other boarders to capture impact. I have offered to review this in my term 4 visit.</p>

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

The Head of Residential explained that there have been no issues that have required external support since my last Standard 3 visit in term 2. That having been said, there has been contact made by the local area safeguarding team related to a historical event that relates to a family member. The school have been asked to monitor the boarder although they are not considered at risk. Given the circumstances that have been explained to me, this is both appropriate and being well managed. This reflects the high standards of safeguarding that I have come to expect at Linden Lodge. As a result of my discussions, it is clear to me that safeguarding practices remain 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 Residential 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 85.3% and the figure for day pupils is 83.8%. Unauthorised absence for boarders is currently 0%, and for day pupils it is 0.2%. Authorised absence figures are 14.7% for boarders and 16.2% for day students. In all cases the attendance figures are slightly more positive for boarders, indicating that boarding helps to increase attendance.</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. It was also explained to me that there have been a few occasions where incorrect clothing has been sent to families at the end of boarding, but this has not led to complaints. In fact, the particulars have led to staff creating a new system for labelling. Communication remains a strength of the provision and as a result complaints are, in my view, very unlikely.</p>
Sanctions 20.6	<p>The Head of Residential informed me that there have again been no sanctions applied since my last visit. The boarders' needs are met in a way that encourages a family atmosphere, and I saw this in action in team evening meetings with boarders during this visit (see consultation section). As such, I can see that sanctions are therefore avoided through interaction as in a family setting with reasonable and caring conversations, proactive discussion and planning strategies that involve the boarders in decisions and incorporate their views.</p>
Restraint (including restrictive interventions) 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7	<p>The Head of Residential explained that there have been no occasions when restrictive interventions have been used since my last visit. The mutual respect shown in the interactions that I witnessed was joyous at times, and I felt privileged to be a part of the meetings. Boarders feel valued and empowered, and know that their views are going to be listened to. This makes the circumstances when a restrictive intervention may occur very unlikely.</p>

Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)	<p>The Head of Residential informed me that the overall environment risk assessment is ready for approval by the Governing Board, and I will review the changes in term 4's visit.</p> <p>Other than this, the planning for each boarder remains of the highest standard, and the way in which views are sought helps feed into this, as explained in the section of the report where I cover the documents I have reviewed.</p>
Placement Plans 7.2	<p>Placement plans remain as 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. The Head of Residential shared the transition planning document that is used to construct these documents in this visit and I am happy to confirm that this is extremely thorough approach, that includes dates and is used as a detailed checklist for each boarder. A very impressive process.</p>

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

The use of the buildings and shared spaces at Linden Lodge is a key feature of the success of boarding. Bedrooms are personalised by boarders in order to make them homely and functional, and shared spaces are creatively and thoughtfully appointed.

Student evaluations have been undertaken on the merger of floors and the process that was undertaken to incorporate student views. These state how students were overwhelmingly positive about the developments, especially in the communal spaces, as they have had input into how the spaces are being changed and developed. Having scrutinised these feedback forms I was struck by how much importance has been attached to the new bedrooms, spending time with friends from a different floor, and by the importance of having more people and making more activities possible. These are valuable examples of positive feedback, and demonstrate the importance of growing independence in the boarders.

In addition to the high quality buildings, bedrooms and communal spaces indoors, I also had a tour of the newly opened, extremely large and well-constructed adventure play space that is located just outside the boarding building. This contains soft flooring for safety and is a beautiful addition to the surroundings. Even in the deepest and coldest winter day that I visited on I can see the impact this will have. It contains a purpose built outdoor café space and lots of places to explore and sit and chat.

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). Meeting with the Head and Deputy Head of Residential, and the Co-Headteacher for Residential

There has been a process of advertising for several key posts; a newly appointed Admin Officer for Residential has been appointed and the processes of DBS checks are underway. The aim is to see this staff member start as soon as possible. This staff member is intended to support the administration side of the leadership of residential and is seen as a very positive move. In addition to this, there have been two rounds of advertising for Senior Care workers to be appointed that have not seen any applicants that have met the threshold expected for experience and aptitude. The Head and Deputy Head of Residential also informed me that there is now a process underway to recruit these two Senior Care workers through the use of a specialist agency. This has been agreed at an academy level, and is seen as a strong commitment from the leadership. I explored capacity with the Head and Deputy of Residential in the period up to the appointment of these staff to make sure that the leaders are confident that care can be maintained at the high standards they expect. I am pleased to be able to report that the staff are confident that care is, and will be maintained.

We also discussed how these staff could be used and the potential organisational arrangements that might best benefit the organisation and the new staff. These discussions included how to best balance induction, consistent staffing for young people, and how to grow the experience level of the new staff. As my subsequent visits proceed, the staff stated they would explain developments as they happen. A key principle stated was to place the needs and best interests of the boarders at the centre of all these discussions.

In discussion over the case study approach being taken, it was suggested that a connection to another provider that I visit may be helpful to both parties. I have agreed to supply contacts for this to be arranged.

I was also informed that a new activity co-ordinator has begun working between 4 and 8pm every Tuesday and Thursday, and between 4 and 6pm every Monday and Wednesday. The activities on offer include cooking activities and other independence skills that are connected to the waking day curriculum. It was explained to me that this is leading to families being invited in to take part in this process, and is supporting strong progress in independence skills. As I was present in the team meetings in this visit I saw this beginning, and the power it has upon the positive mood of the boarders was inspirational to see. This is also connected to the habilitation staff team and building regarding community links (shopping etc). The therapy team are involved in this as they do work in class about life skills, and support transfer to see these skills in action during boarding time.

During this visit it was suggested that I meet next time with a member of the HR team. I am very happy to do this, and I also suggested that a process of gathering staff voice would be a productive use of time, especially related to recent staff developments. I intend to make a point of conducting a consultation with HR in term 4.

(2). Consultation with boarders

During this visit I toured both floors of the residential provision again and spent time in both during their preparations for the evening of boarding. In both there was a truly warm feeling of a family preparing for an evening, and in the larger of the two, this began with an evening 'Hello' from all taking part, myself included.

The boarders all took turns explaining how their day had gone, each staff member was introduced for the evening, and then evening activities were outlined. Each boarder was given a choice of evening activities, and this was connected to their own personal targets, with several given the opportunity to lead activities. An example was that of a language club being organised by a boarder that has recently been learning the Russian language.

What really struck me through these meetings was the feeling not only of family, but of true empowerment and development of independence through choices and leadership opportunities. Boarding is more than an

extension of the school day, it is very much a part of the young people's life and development. They feel truly valued.

(3). Parent Consultation, targeted at parents of a new boarder.

As part of this visit I spoke to a parent of a recently arrived boarder, although a long term pupil at Linden Lodge, and asked about their experiences of boarding:

The parent expressed the view that needs are comprehensively met at Linden Lodge, and that the transition to boarding was extremely smooth as a result of a very close working relationship with staff in education and residential. Their daughter attended an afterschool club in Richley House prior to boarding, and boarding has felt like a natural extension to her time. As the parent said "it feels like she's always been boarding".

The main aim of boarding for this young person is to develop a sense of independence and to have time that is just hers, as opposed to the regularity of family support. In this the parent said that the staff have really helped her, she always returns happy and enjoys the time a great deal.

In terms of impact upon the boarder and the family, the boarding experience has been nothing but a positive. There had been an overnight stay in another provision in place prior to beginning the current arrangement, but this had not been as positive experience, but this has been transformed by the stays at Linden Lodge. Practically also, the overnight stay supports family and work life balance at home well too.

In summary, the parent stated that there were absolutely no concerns and the family could not praise or rate the boarding experience any higher.

(4). Consultation with Speech and Language Therapist

I spoke at length to a member of the therapy team about her work as a Speech and Language therapist working at Linden Lodge, and the caseload that included those that board.

The therapist explained that her caseload was between 35 and 40 youngsters, and that this caseload includes a large proportion of the boarders. The work supports boarders and staff in their work with the boarders as they work towards their EHCP targets. The goals that are being worked upon are often tailored towards their time in boarding. All are evaluated formally against targets every 6 months.

The offer that each young person receives depends upon agreed funding, but is categorised in one of 4 categories that increase in intensity and frequency of dedicated sessions (either in groups or individually), up to a maximum package (Package 4) that sees weekly sessions 1:1 with the therapist.

What came over very clearly was that therapy sessions at Linden Lodge are not simply applied at the statutory level, and can very often go well beyond the bare terms of the agreements.

It was very clear to me that therapy at Linden Lodge is deeply embedded in daily practice and has a palpable impact upon the lives of the boarders (and pupils generally). The passion demonstrated by the therapist that I spoke to was very clear to see, and is translated into a pride in the transformational impact of their work to transform lives.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision
<p>This was another impressive visit, in which I was struck by the seamless way the residential leaders had assumed the mantle passed on by the former Head of Care. Most impressive in this visit has been the way that the passion for the work that is held by the staff is translated into real impact in the boarding provision, and is overtly observable in the words, actions and atmosphere generated by the boarders. The meetings I attended in this visit were a true highlight.</p> <p>I would like to thank everyone that I spent time with for their warm welcome, and I look forward to coming back in term 4 to further help with the development of a special provision.</p>
<p>Name: Mark Goode Date: 23/01/2023</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u> <u>To ensure that the components carried over from term 2 are available in term 4 when I visit:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make the CEO and MAT approved improvement plan available in term 4 if possible. • To make available the outcome of discussion surrounding the case study approach to impact presentation in term 4 if possible. 		

<p><u>Leadership and Management</u> To ensure that a representative is available during my term 4 visit to discuss HR processes, staff voice, and any other aspects that are deemed a priority.</p> <p><u>SCCIF: Effectiveness of Leaders and Managers; Outstanding Criteria</u> Leaders and managers create a culture of aspiration and positivity. They have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.</p>		
<p><u>Staffing and Recruitment</u> To push ahead with recruitment of Senior Care staff, and embed the new Residential Admin Staff member appropriately into the staff team.</p> <p><u>SCCIF: The overall experiences and progress of students; Outstanding Criteria</u> There is significant evidence of change and improvement for children because of the actions of the staff working at the school. The progress of children is exceptional, taking into account their starting points.</p>		

Head of Residential's Comments
<p>A lovely report to read, also capturing how committed the residential team are to giving the young people the best possible experience. The team are very proud of our young people's achievements and constantly strive to build and empower the young people to develop life skills for the future.</p>
<p>Name: Danny Sinclair</p>
<p>Date: 2nd February 2023</p>

Co-Head Teacher's Comments

I am very pleased to see that the work that the residential team do to support all of the young people towards achieving the best outcomes is captured in this report.

Name: Sarah Norris

Date: 02/02/2023

The report is well written with positive evidence of effective care for residents at Richley House. This visit was unannounced as per current practice and the Independent Visitor (IV) has built a degree of familiarity with the service after several visits. It is helpful that the IV can carry themes from report to report and he describes the progress of issues identified during his visits. The rolling action plan is a helpful method for Governors to understand the progress made and to identify current issues at Richley House.

There are several areas of good quality practice identified in the report. The evidence is triangulated by reference to recording and conversation with staff as well as direct information from pupils' feedback forms.

The comment on safeguarding practice is positive and it is helpful for Governors to be assured that is the experience of the IV.

Staffing remains an issue for Richley House as for the School in general and it is helpful that the IV will discuss this with HR on his next visit.

The IV has commented on the commitment of the staff at each visit and Governors want to add our appreciation of that hard work by residential staff and leaders

Chair of Governors Kieran Travers and Rupert Marks

Date 21 Feb 2023