



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Linden Lodge School
Date of previous visit	18/01/2023
Date of this visit	30/03/2023
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	13.30/14.00
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 number of boarders accessing the residential provision is currently unchanged from my last visit at 16. The main developments since my last visit have been an OFSTED Inspection of the residential provision (during which I received a call as the independent visitor), and changes in staffing.

The Inspection is unpublished at the time of writing but the Co-Headteacher and Head of Residential explained that they were pleased overall with the outcome. The residential provision has been through significant changes in leadership in the past year, and the fact that a positive outcome has been the result is a pleasing development. I congratulated the leaders on this, and it is clear to me that they are focussed on continual improvement after my visit.

The main areas for consideration and improvement that have been highlighted in the inspection concerned the depth of safeguarding discussion in supervision and the timeliness of upgrades to the physical environment. The Head of Residential has shared a document detailing the maintenance plans (see consultations section), and it is my intention to support work on supervision with some supportive work in my next visit in the area of Human Resources.

The discussion also covered the fact that there have been developments in staffing. A new admin staff member has been added to the team (whom I met very briefly as she was leaving for the day), and the Head of Residential explained that her work has been very useful in supporting staff in their roles working with the boarders. The Head of Residential also explained that through new funding from the MAT, there are 4 new staff starting shortly after the Easter break, and that the long standing Child Care Manager is set to leave. There has been an internal appointment and a healthy succession plan was explained, as the new staff member is an internal appointment from the school. This represents a good deal of change, and as a result I intend to undertake a thematic evaluation of aspects of the HR processes as they relate to these developments.

It is clear to me that the Head of Residential and the Co-Headteacher are very positive about the future of the residential setup, and I would like to use time in the next visit to meet several of these new staff, and spend time with the Human Resources team as well.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor
<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>The Head of Residential explained that the documents in question have been considered by the MAT leadership, and he also shared with me the general areas of feedback received in the recent OFSTED Inspection, although not yet published. Consideration is needed to be given to incorporating these components (see above in the context section).</p> <p>The Head of Residential also shared with me a programme of maintenance that is a part of the improvement planning process, and connected to the OFSTED development areas. I have covered this in the section of this report that relates to the suitability of the buildings.</p> <p>It is my intention to access a case study by the time of the next Standard 3 visit in term 5.</p>

<p>Leadership and Management 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>This was discussed in the light of the updated context and imminent staff changes. It is my intention to discuss the HR processes by the time of the next visit, as the HR staff member was not available in the term 4 visit. This will be dovetailed with a consultation with the newly appointed Deputy and the Admin staff member for residential as well. Given the change I intend to undertake a thematic review of HR processes in the next visit.</p>
<p>Staffing and Recruitment To push ahead with recruitment of Senior Care staff, and embed the new Residential Admin Staff member appropriately into the staff team.</p>	<p>Please see the context section of the report for the update on staffing. The Head of Residential expressed bittersweet feelings about the onward movement of the Child Care Manager but is also excited for the next phase of development for the service.</p> <p>In addition, the Admin staff member is stated as having taken a lot of pressure off LSAs and is extremely helpful, capable and proactive. I am looking forward to meeting her in the next visit.</p>

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

The Head of Residential explained that there have again been no issues that have required external support since my last Standard 3 visit in term 3. In discussion with the Head of Residential, during which the processes of reporting concerns were covered, it was clear that there is a culture of high vigilance at Linden Lodge. This extends to the reporting of concerns in a very thorough fashion, and a high level of awareness. Staff are ready and willing to use the 'My Concern' system, and this includes a sensible approach to bruising, scratches etc. This leads to healthy review processes internally. There is an awareness that the needs of the boarders at Linden Lodge means that some issues are expected, but there is a proportionate sense of judgement around this area.

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
<p>Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 20.9</p>	<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 89.8% and the figure for day pupils is 85.0%. Unauthorised absence for boarders is currently 0%, and for day pupils it is 0.001%. Authorised absence figures are 10.2% for boarders and 14.8% for day students. In all cases the attendance figures are slightly more positive for boarders, indicating that boarding helps to increase attendance. Equally positive is that all figures are more positive than during the visit in term 3.</p>
<p>Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3</p>	<p>The Head of Residential explained that there have been no complaints received since the last Standard 3 visit in term 3, and gave me a strong illustration of why through an exposition of how the residential team have supported the school operation regarding a missing jacket for a boarder. The relationships that have been built during the time in residential have been helpful in navigating this situation.</p>
<p>Sanctions 20.6</p>	<p>The Head of Residential informed me that there have once again been no sanctions applied since my last visit in term 3. The boarders' needs are met in a way that encourages a sense of achievement and leadership. I saw this in action in the evening activities that were chosen by and led by boarders and were clearly based around</p>

	<p>their interests. This approach means that boarders feel empowered and interested, therefore there is no cause for conduct that could lead to a sanction.</p>
<p>Restraint (including restrictive interventions) 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7</p>	<p>The Head of Residential explained that there have been again no occasions when restrictive interventions have been used since my last visit in term 3. All that I saw in this visit reassured me that the circumstances when a restrictive intervention may occur is very unlikely.</p>
<p>Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)</p>	<p>During this Standard 3 visit I again discussed the paperwork and processes for Care Plans and Risk Assessments. These are updated in line with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards at least termly, or when significant changes require updates.</p> <p>Planning for each boarder is of the highest standard, with detailed information gathering upon entry, and ongoing dialogue with families throughout the boarding stays. This was echoed in the parental consultations I undertook during this visit.</p>
<p>Placement Plans 7.2</p>	<p>A suggestion to streamline processes that I made during this visit was to consider including dates in the process of updates and the use of a communications log for each boarder to support this.</p> <p>In addition, I suggested that it may be worth considering the use of the new admin officer to co-ordinate the record keeping of termly contact with families related to checks of the Plans and Risk Assessments. In discussion, the Head of Residential reflected that a possible set up could be to see key workers for each boarder responsible for the update, and that the Head of Residential and new Deputy can quality assure the process and outcomes. This seems a very sensible arrangement.</p>

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

The Head of Residential explained the fact that during the recent OFSTED inspection, comment was passed upon the upkeep of the buildings and that upgrades to residential rooms could be more timely. It was also commented that the ground floor could have a more homely feel to it. I have scrutinised a document detailing the planned works for the residential setup that has been shared with me and this is also included in the overall plan to improve the provision.

During this visit I witnessed multiple areas of the residential provision being used by the boarders very effectively. This is covered in the consultations section in more depth, but was all clearly based on boarder preference. One particular highlight was a cookery group that contained three boarders that were preparing a meal together. All had needs that mean that the provision's furnishings are an important feature, and one boarder was able to demonstrate to me the use of several household appliances that have adaptations to make them accessible. This includes a speaking microwave oven, hob and braille touch buttons to support boarders' independence skills. This was a very humbling experience to be a part of and the boarders were making their favourite food together and very much enjoying it.

We also covered the fact that the impressive outdoor area has been in use when the weather has enabled it.

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

As this was an unannounced visit under the terms of Standard 3, it was unfortunate that I arrived as the newest staff member in the residential setup was leaving for the day. Given the nature of our discussions around staffing, I have concluded that the most efficient way to support Human Resources developments is to undertake a supportive thematic analysis in term 5. To do this, and stay within the spirit of unannounced standard 3 visits, it is my intention to undertake a separate visit to undertake this component of the next visit on the 25th April. This way I can then undertake a shorter unannounced part of the termly visit on another day.

This meeting also included follow up related to a query over a boarder staying past their notional upper age threshold of 20. The Head of Residential had contacted me between Standard 3 visits for advice, and I responded that risk assessing appropriately and contacting other boarders' families to support this was a prudent move. The aim was to support the boarder to complete exams without disruption. I am happy to report that this has happened and all seems to have been undertaken with great professionalism.

When in discussion with the Head of Residential it was very clear that there is an awareness of the fact that there has been a lot of change taking place in terms of staff in the last year, and the imminent departure of the Deputy Head of Residential, alongside the start of the other new staff is a period that will need to be managed sensitively. The conversation centred on the intent to empower new people through modelling the expectations of the residential provision and growing a team that understand what is expected. It is likely to be a period of challenge but it is one that the Head of Residential is looking forward to.

(2). Consultation with boarders during activities

During this visit I once again toured both floors of the residential provision alongside the Deputy Head of Residential. This time it was during a period of free choice activities that were designed to see boarders take part in and lead activities.

The activities I observed included several that were clearly being enjoyed thoroughly by boarders with very different interests. One saw boarders playing 'Bop It' in a very enjoyable fashion involving the use of other interactive technologies. This was a vibrant and fun activity that saw staff and boarders alike very engaged. Several other boarders were engaged in Wii games of their choice, and were extremely content. 3 boarders were engaged in a cooking activity that is mentioned elsewhere in the report, using assistive technology that was impressive to see in action. There were also a further 2 groups of boarders that were enjoying music and relaxing. The choices were personal and had different aims, with one group enjoying dancing, whilst one boarder was being soothed with classical music, as is their pattern in the evenings.

The boarders I spoke to were very happy to engage and explain their enjoyment of boarding, they also explained very clearly that they were leading the choices as well as the activities.

Parent Consultations , targeted at parents of a new boarder.

As part of this visit I spoke to parents of two boarders that are currently boarding at Linden Lodge during the days that followed the Standard 3 Visit.

The parents spoken to both expressed the views that the needs of their children are fully met in boarding. They were clear in stating that the lengths staff go to in order to ensure the vast majority of needs are met is reassuring as a parent. When asked about the communication and support offered by staff they were very

complimentary, and between the two parents both the Head of Residential and the Deputy were singled out for particularly complimentary praise. Communication was commented upon as being a particularly strong feature of the oversight.

In terms of impact common to both was the development of independence skills, a greater range of experiences, extending social opportunities and one specified the 'making of a great, possibly lifelong friendship'. The impact on family life as a real positive was also referenced by one of the parents as a help to the whole family.

Neither parent had anything negative to say at all, and raised no concerns.

(4) Consultation related to maintenance plans

Partly in response to the recent recommendation related to the timeliness of the maintenance schedule, the Head of Residential shared a detailed schedule of work that has been identified as requiring completion as soon as possible, and since December 2022. There have been 12 issues currently recorded and the works scheduled with dates allocated up to and including across the Summer Holiday. I would strongly advocate that this process is monitored closely and slippage avoided if at all possible, and possibly add a further detailed audit of premises undertaken ahead of the Summer Break as well. This, if completed on schedule, will (in my opinion) go a long way to responding in a positive fashion to the recommendation from OFSTED.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision

This was an important Standard 3 visit in terms of future consolidation of the recent events that have transpired. The positive mindset of the leadership team of residential is an illustration that the handover that has happened from one Headteacher to 2 Co-Heads, and from one Head of Residential to another has been navigated strongly. To have maintained the standards in the way that has happened has been impressive to observe at close quarters.

As we move towards the end of the school year there is a further period of transition to navigate, and I feel after this visit, that the Head of Residential is in a strong position to ensure that the next phase of staff at Linden Lodge are able to again build upon the very strong foundations. I am looking forward to supporting this as the year progresses.

I would like to thank everyone that I spent time with for their warm welcome, and I look forward to coming back in term 5 to further help with the development of a special provision.

Name: Mark Goode **Date: 14/04/2023**

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Recruitment Processes</u> For the Head of Residential to support a deep dive into aspects of the recent recruitment HR during the visit.</p> <p><u>SCCIF: The effectiveness of leaders and managers (Good Criteria)</u> The provision is properly staffed and resourced. Staff, including agency staff, are suitably vetted, qualified and able to deliver high-quality services to children. Arrangements for recruitment and appraisals are robust.</p>	<p>Meeting arranged for Mark to meet with Melissa Dunn HR Director.</p> <p>Look at recruitment and vetting information.</p> <p>On Marks next visit, to meet the newly appointed staff.</p> <p>From out last Ofsted inspection: Supervision form updated for staff to reflect on, safeguarding.</p> <p>Staff to provide more information, discuss safeguarding in more detail.</p> <p>Reflect on practice,</p>	Term 5 2023
<p><u>Risk Assessments and Action Planning</u> To consider the additions to the review process as cited in the mandatory areas of this report related to dating all updates, and utilising admin support to aid the review process.</p> <p><u>SCCIF: The overall experiences and progress of children (Outstanding Criteria)</u> Professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children. Professional practice responds positively to children’s complex and changing needs. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.</p>	<p>New Administrator Assistant and Head of Residential, will review Risk Assessment, every term if there is any changes that need to be included.</p> <p>Head of Residential and Deputy Child Care Manager, will produce development plan, looking at progress and achievements. Meeting the needs of the children and young people, responding to their individual needs.</p>	Term 5 2023
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u> To use the supplied blank template to begin an audit of the SCCIF as a means to furthering the development of the residential provision</p> <p><u>SCCIF: The effectiveness of leaders and managers (Outstanding Criteria)</u></p>	<p>Looking at the SCCIF, staff to look at expectations for the children and young people, how to change and improve their lives of the children and young people they are responsible for.</p>	Term 6 2022-23

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.		
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Head of Residential's Comments

A very pleasing report to read. Mark managed to capture so much information and good practice. We will work on environmental recommendations, The children and young people will be involved in helping to choose fixtures and fittings.

Name: Danny Sinclair

Date: 25th April 2023

Head Teachers' Comments

I am delighted that the Independent Visitor was able to see a varied group of activities happening to support a varied group of young people. The staff in residential work so passionately to make sure the students get the best experience day in and day out and I am glad that it shone through.

Name: Sarah Norris

Date: 05/05/2023

Formal Response from the Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school
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This report coincided with the OfSTED inspection visit. Though the final report was not available it is helpful to read that both reports provide strong evidence of good quality care of children at Richley House.

We read evidence of effective safe care by a committed staff group and effective leadership of that provision.

Name: Kieran Travers and Rupert Marks

Date: 1 August 2023