



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Linden Lodge School
Date of previous visit	30/03/2023
Date of this visit	09/05/2023 (pre visit also on 25/04/23)
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	14.30
Visit Supported by	Vicky Watson – Deputy Child Care Manager & Sarah Norris – Co-Head of School

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.

This Standard 3 visit took place during a week in which the Head of Residential was attending a week-long trip that included 5 residential pupils and a range of day pupils. The boarding house was being overseen by the recently appointed Deputy Child Care Manager, supported by the Co-Head designated to Residential who is sleeping on site throughout this week and is constantly on call if required. There are 7 pupils boarding throughout this week.

The Deputy Child Care Manager explained that since my last visit there has been one boarder leaver who was on an extended stay. This extension was to support their ongoing welfare and has now been concluded.

The number of boarders accessing the residential provision is currently unchanged from my last visit, but as stated above, this week sees a number of them attending the school residential trip.

The recent inspection by OFSTED was a positive experience for the staff and leaders as it has affirmed the high quality of the work undertaken in boarding. There have now been a range of new staff take up their posts, most notably the new Deputy Child Care Manager. After my last visit, when the departure of the former Child Care Manager and the imminent arrival of a replacement and several other staff was explained, I have undertaken an exploration of Human Resources processes for this report. The details of this are included in the thematic area of this report. I will be looking to add to this with discussions with other recently appointed staff in term 6, when they are more fully complete in terms of the induction programme. This includes discussion with the new Deputy Child Care Manager, who has explained how her role has started.

I have also undertaken a consultation with a parent of a boarder that is experiencing a few health issues to ascertain their status. This is included in the consultations section of the report.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor
<p><u>Leadership and Management Updates</u></p> <p>To make the CEO and MAT approved improvement plan available if possible including the additions from the recent OFSTED Inspection</p> <p>To make available the outcome of discussion surrounding the case study approach to impact presentation if possible.</p>	<p>The Co-Headteacher explained that the improvement plan has been with the MAT leadership and now incorporates elements from the recent OFSTED inspection. The Co-Headteacher also explained that a Case Study approach is in development to illustrate the impact of boarding, and that a similar approach is being developed to illustrate how staff are supported and capture the range of skills present in the staff team. There has been discussion with the Director of HR since my visit between Standard 3 visits, and adaptations to Induction processes are being considered in this regard.</p>
<p><u>Recruitment Processes</u></p> <p>For the Head of Residential to support a deep dive into aspects of the recent recruitment HR during the visit.</p>	<p>I undertook a separate consultation visit ahead of this Standard 3 visit where I met the Director of HR and discussed a range of elements related to HR processes. I also met with the new Deputy Child Care Manager in this visit. There are plans to see me discuss induction processes in term 6 with a range of new staff to complete this work. All aspects are covered in</p>

	the thematic area section of this report, and will be continued in the report for term 6's visit.
<p>Risk Assessments and Action Planning</p> <p>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>	The Co-Headteacher confirmed that the process for updating the Risk Assessments and Care Plans is under constant review, and that the processes for the application of the role of the admin officer to support the Head of Residential and Deputy Child Care Manager is evolving. I suggested that I will look to discuss this further with the Head of Residential in term 6.
<p>Leadership and Management</p> <p>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>	The Co-Headteacher explained that this process was underway and will be further developed between now and the next visit I undertake in term 6. I will look to speak to the Head of Residential at that time.

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

The Co-Headteacher who has responsibility of residential and I discussed safeguarding at length in this Standard 3 visit, and I am happy to confirm that there have been no concerns raised since my last visit that have required referral externally for support.

The discussion also covered the fact that there is a weekly meeting of senior staff that covers safeguarding, behaviour and attendance every Wednesday. This has been in place since the period when the Co-Headteacher became the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Head of Safeguarding across the school and has a very consistent agenda that is designed to be strategic and focussed. There is a sampling exercise that takes place in each session and clear discussion around the meeting of needs across the school, including in residential. The constituent staff members include the Head of Residential, who is a fully trained DSL, as the Deputy will be in due course.

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</p> <p>20.9</p>	<p>The Deputy Child Care Manager explained that there have again been no missing episodes and no exclusions since the last Standard 3 visit.</p> <p>Attendance figures for this year to date for boarding students is running at 88.7% and the figure for day pupils is 88.6%. Unauthorised absence for boarders is currently 0%, and for day pupils it is 0.1%. Authorised absence figures are 11.3% for boarders and 16.0% for day students. In all cases the attendance figures remain slightly more positive for boarders, indicating that boarding helps to increase attendance.</p>
<p>Complaints</p> <p>19.1, 19.2, 19.3</p>	The Deputy Child Care Manager explained that there have been no complaints received since the last Standard 3 visit in term 4, and it was clear to me during the visit, and in all of my discussions, how well supported boarders and families are.
<p>Sanctions</p> <p>20.6</p>	The Deputy Child Care Manager informed me that there have once again been no sanctions applied since my last visit in term 3. The interactions I experienced with

	boarders in my visit were very positive, and during these I witnessed support that was based on their needs and interests. As a result, they feel at home, and sanctions are extremely unlikely to be needed in my view.
Restraint (including restrictive interventions) 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7	The Co-Headteacher who has responsibility of Residential explained that there have been again no occasions when restrictive interventions have been used since my last visit in term 4. All that I saw in this visit reassured me that the circumstances when a restrictive intervention may occur remain unlikely.
Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)	In my meeting with the Deputy Child Care Manager, we covered the fact that the system for updating the boarders' Risk Assessments and Care Plans is evolving to include the processes being supported by the recently appointed admin officer for boarding. I was impressed with the knowledge of the boarders that was shown by the Deputy Child Care Manager, given the relative recent start date. The documentation at Linden Lodge is created from a very thorough process of information gathering, and these processes remain the bedrock of the care I witnessed in this visit.
Placement Plans 7.2	

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

The Deputy Child Care Manager explained that the action plan that was shared at the last Standard 3 visit is in process and that the works are taking place. She also explained that work is underway to repair a freezer that has stopped working. A repair team is due the day after my visit, and I feel this is extremely quick.

Between visits I was also fortunate enough to attend the official opening of the impressive playground area in the centre of the grounds. Whilst this is a whole school facility it is regularly used by the boarders, and the opening was a gala event. I have commented upon this at the start of the report, and the commitment shown by a range of supporters was clear to me. This illustrates the commitment of the staff, governors, trustees and the community to ensuring that Linden Lodge continuously develops. In short, the buildings and provision are in safe hands in my view. The staff are committed to ensuring that they continually evolve to support the boarders and I am confident that this will continue.

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.

Consultation with the Co-Headteacher

As this was an unannounced visit under the terms of Standard 3, I arrived on a day when the Head of Residential was offsite at a residential trip. As a result, I spent time with the Co-Headteacher and the recently appointed Deputy Child Care Manager. The details of my discussion with the Deputy are covered in the thematic area. The Co-Headteacher explained the arrangements for the week with the Head of Residential offsite, and I was impressed by the processes in place; the Co-Headteacher remaining on site and empowering the Deputy to oversee residential for the week, but with a safety net in place.

We also discussed the fact that the leadership arrangements are evolving to see the Head of Residential modelling strong practice, and also utilising the staff team that are now in place to see his role become as strategic as possible and enable delegation of tasks to others in a safe and supportive fashion. This process is gradual, and I will look to discuss the evolution of this in term 6 with the Head of Residential.

We also discussed the recent opening ceremony for the new playground. The Co-Headteacher explained that the event was in part designed to illustrate to the many contributors how the funds have been spent, and of course to thank them for their efforts. It was also a chance to ensure that ongoing investment remains on the agenda, and she explained that several high profile members of the local community have been in touch about supporting events in the coming months. I was very impressed with the clear love for Linden Lodge on display during the event itself, and spoke to a number of the trustees about their involvement. This included a local member of parliament. It is increasingly clear that Linden Lodge enjoys the support of a committed group of supporters and this can only benefit the boarding provision.

Consultation with boarders during activities

During this visit I once again toured both floors of the residential provision alongside the Deputy Child Care Manager. This time it was during a period in the early part of handover from the day at school. There were less boarders on house than in previous visits as a result of the residential trip. That having been said, I was able to speak to a range of boarders and see them enjoying music, relaxing into the evening, and one was tidying up his bedroom. All were happy to chat with me, and several recognised or remembered me from previous visits. They were all supported well by staff, but were also showing independence in the use of their time.

Parent Consultations, targeted at parents of a new boarder.

As part of this visit I spoke to a parent of a boarder that has been attending residential for around 18 months but has recently suffered an injury and had to pause boarding. The parent explained that the purpose of boarding had been to support social development and independent living skills as the boarder is now in the lower 6th form.

The parent stated that the boarder’s needs are well understood and met by the boarding team, and that he has become very happy in residential. So much so that he has requested more boarding stays. The communication has been strong and he has become more confident, joining Scouts was cited as a further consequence and indication of positive impact. The fact that he has bonded and enjoyed working with certain adults has been explained as an important part of this process. Recently he has suffered an injury that has prevented boarding, but he is gradually returning to boarding, and the parent is very happy with the support being received from the residential staff.

The parent has no concerns about the boarding setup, but did pass comment upon the recent staff changes, and that whilst they understood the pressures in the care sector, they hoped staff retention could happen.

Thematic Areas	
Standard/SCCIF Reference	Evidence / Observation
	<p><u>Human Resources thematic work.</u></p> <p>Following the Standard 3 visit in term 4, when the departure of the Deputy Child Care Manager and the news of an incoming replacement and a range of new staff was disclosed, I suggested a thematic consideration of Human Resources. This is taking the form of meetings and discussion with new staff across the Standard 3 visits in terms 5 and 6, as well as some time with the Director of Human Resources. This report covers a pre-meeting with the Director of HR and a meeting with the New Deputy Child Care Manager. Meetings with new staff will take place on the Standard 3 visit in term 6.</p>

Pre-Meeting with the Director of HR (25th April 2023)

This consultation took place out of the sequence of the Standard 3 visits as a result of the fact that they are unannounced and this does not work as well for an agreed meeting.

The Director of HR explained that applicants were sourced in a variety of ways and that this included advertising in TES Jobs, the Guardian Newspaper and local media. In keeping with many organisations in the care sector there have been challenges in recruiting suitable staff that have meant creativity in using agencies to widen the area and type of applicants in a proactive fashion. This has been successful in recent cases.

In discussion over safeguarding processes, the Director of HR illustrated how screening and shortlisting are comprehensive in considering the way applications are written, gaps in employment histories and short stays are considered, and that in interviews there are explorations of these elements. All interview panels contain a member of the HR team, and that safer recruitment training has been undertaken. No interview panel takes place without at least one panel member having this training. The questioning includes safeguarding discussion and definitions, as well as scenario based questions that are designed to be relevant to the roles in question. Prior to appointment all staff are subject to full enhanced DBS checks and historical checks with previous employers.

We also discussed induction processes, and the Director of HR explained that there is a 6-week programme in place that sees coverage of key policies, safeguarding training that covers all KCSIE updates (whenever an appointment takes place), use of online testing systems for evidence and specific Linden Lodge approaches. The programme also covers a range of common conditions for Linden Lodge pupils (visual impairment, hearing impairment, communication methods, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy) – essentially an overview of all areas that are covered internally in a very wide-ranging service. It is my view that this induction is comprehensive and supportive, but the Director of HR explained that she wishes to develop it further, and I will look to support this into term 6 by discussing it with recently appointed staff, and reviewing paperwork from the Director of HR.

I scrutinised a range of staff folders and found them to be extremely organised and thorough, containing all sections that would be hoped for, and the Director of HR reported that the lead inspector at the recent OFSTED inspection had been pleased with the level of detail and the thorough nature of record keeping. I concur with this view.

We also discussed supervision for staff, and the Director of HR explained that the expectation was that supervision takes place regularly. I discussed this with the Deputy Child Care Manager in this visit *(detailed below) and will be covering this in more detail in term 6 with other new staff.

Overall, I am happy to report that the Director of HR illustrated a setup that is thorough, well managed and above all safe. I have no concerns about HR processes so far, in fact quite the opposite.

Discussion with Deputy Child Care Manager

I met with the Deputy Child Care Manager to discuss her start and aspects of HR, and she explained that since beginning her role a few weeks earlier had been shadowing the Head of Residential. Her previous role had been within the school, and she had undertaken work in the boarding houses prior to starting, so has had a head start in many ways.

Her shadowing has entailed building rapport with staff, coverage of all plans and risk assessments, medication processes, staff rota work and other essential components. This week is the first week without shadowing, but the way she has been supported by the Co-Headteacher (who is on call and on site this week) was explained. In essence she feels fully supported and confident. The fact that there are less boarders in her first week is a very sensible and pragmatic decision in my view.

She was keen to state that her application had involved a full formal interview and that this contained what she described as a thorough examination of safeguarding understanding. This matches well with the explanation given to me by the Director of HR.

Related to induction and supervision, the Deputy Child Care Manager was recruited internally and has therefore undertaken many aspects of the training that new members of staff will see, and her induction has been about learning the expectations of the role, but any gaps in knowledge or confidence are set to be plugged. Supervision has been more or less constant (through shadowing) so far, but in a formal sense this is set to assume its regular shape in the coming week. She will be overseeing supervision of up to 10 staff herself and the intention is to mirror the practice she receives with her staff.

Overall she feels very well supported and confident. I look forward to catching up with her in the next visit to see how things are progressing.

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision

This was another impressive visit to the residential setup at Linden Lodge, and it is testament to the strength of the provision that it has been as positive and wide-ranging as it has without the Head of Residential being on site. This is a healthy sign in my estimation. The quality of care remains high, and I was very pleased to have time with the Deputy Child Care Manager in the way that panned out. I was also very impressed with all aspects of the work undertaken in the area of HR, which I will look to complete in my next visit.

I would like to thank everyone that I spent time with for their warm welcome, and I look forward to coming back in term 6.

Name: Mark Goode

Date: 12/05/2023

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT

Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u> For the Head of Residential to update the IV in term 6 as to the status of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residential Improvement Plan (after the MAT leaders' feedback) - The use of Admin Support to help with review of Care Plans and Risk Assessments. - Developments in the use of a case study approach to impact for boarders and staff. <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria); The effectiveness of leaders and managers</u> Leaders and managers develop and maintain professional relationships between the school and partner agencies that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.</p>	<p>Head of Residential will provide updated information, regarding Residential improvement plan.</p> <p>Timetable of risk assessment and care plan review.</p> <p>Case study of impact on Residential young people and staff.</p>	<p>Term 6 2023 (as carried over owing to Head of Residential being off site)</p>
<p><u>Human Resources</u> For the Head of Residential to prompt new staff as to the fact that the IV will seek to discuss recruitment and induction processes in term 6. This will add to the thematic area undertaken this time.</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 school. Where children are new to the school, any risks are well understood and are being significantly reduced.</p>	<p>New staff will be informed the independent visitor, will meet with them and discuss interview and recruitment.</p> <p>Staff will attend training regularly regarding safeguarding. Safeguarding is discussed and recorded in supervision, staff will explore further the impact of safeguarding.</p>	<p>Term 6 2023</p>
<p><u>SCCIF Audit</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 (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>SCCIF On the next visit from the independent visitors. They will be shown the development of the residential provision.</p>	<p>Term 6 2023 (this was always the intention)</p>

Head of Residential's Comments

A very nice report to read, Mark has managed to capture some many positives. Whilst also showing how the Residential provision is constantly evolving and adapting to meeting young people's needs.

Name: Danny Sinclair

Date: 16th May 2023

Head Teachers' Comments

This is an enjoyable report to read. It identifies all of the positive areas that the team has worked on to achieve and identifies clear points of areas of development.

Name: Sarah Norris

Date: 24.05.2023

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

Another positive report.

The evidence is clear and triangulated with what the IV witnessed on his visits. It is helpful to read evidence of good quality practiced and well cared for residents.

There is evidence of continuing development of high quality practice and it is helpful that the IV can continue report on that development as it is embedded.

Name: Kieran Travers and Rupert Marks.

Date: 1 August 2023