



## Standard 3 Visit

<b>Name of Service</b>	<b>Linden Lodge School</b>
<b>Date of previous visit</b>	<b>01/10/2024</b>
<b>Date of this visit</b>	<b>09/12/2024</b>
<b>Standard 3 Visitor</b>	<b>Mark Goode</b>
<b>Time of visit</b>	<b>14.30 – 17.30</b>
<b>Visit Supported by</b>	<b>Sarah Norris – Co-Headteacher responsible for Residential Danny Sinclair – Head of Residential Vicky Watson – Deputy Residential Childcare Manager</b>

### 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 (last updated 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022, and reviewed as of 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024).**

**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.

I arrived for this visit in the penultimate week of the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of the year and was greeted by the Co-Head for Residential, as well as the Deputy Residential Childcare Manager. The Head of Residential joined us shortly afterwards after completing a supervision meeting. The immediate focus of the visit was the current context, and the leaders informed me that there have been 2 new boarders join the residential cohort since I last visited in term 1. There has also been an increase in boarding for 2 residents to extend their weekly boarding to 2 and 3 nights per week respectively. In the last visit we had discussed the challenges of securing funding for some of these placements and that this had seen protracted delays in terms of start dates in some instances. One of these was a family that I sought feedback from last time and the extension is a clear indication of high quality response from the school to feedback.

This visit saw me once again tour the Residential provision and the leaders pointed out new features that have been worked upon since my last visit in term 1, before I undertook the mandatory checks that are required in a Standard 3 visit alongside the Senior Staff and sought feedback from parents in the days following my visit. In addition to other consultations that I undertook in this visit, I followed up on a number of aspects that had been shared with me by the Head of Residential in response to my last visit, spent time with the staff and boarders, undertook a consultation with the most recently appointed Team Leader, and discussed the provision with a member of the therapy team that was supporting boarders at the time of my visit. In discussion with the Staff it was also made clear that it had been just over a year since the last OFSTED inspection of the Residential Service in November 2023, and that the team expect a visit soon.

### Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor
<p><b><u>Staff Consultation Next Visit</u></b> For the recently appointed Team Leader and I to meet in the next visit that I undertake in term 2 to chat through the process of promotion, supervision and general aspects of working in the new role.</p>	<p><b><u>Response</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mark will have the opportunity to meet with newly appointed Team Leader.</li> <li>2. Mark will be shown our recent staff survey.</li> <li>3. Update on staff achievement obtaining care / management qualification.</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Verification in this visit</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I spent time in consultation with the Team Leader in this visit. The details are contained in the consultations section below.</li> <li>2. The Head of Residential agreed to send this to me for a review and consultation – please see the detail in the consultations section below.</li> <li>3. The Head of Residential detailed the fact that a number of staff have been working towards (and achieving) higher level courses. This includes a team leader that is now qualified to Level 5, and the Deputy Residential Childcare Manager achieving Level 4. In addition, there has been an apprenticeship review that has led to a new provider being brought in from January 2025. This was the result of feedback from staff and is a provider based in West London. This is helpful in that several staff had fed back that they wished to see greater use of face to face support/supervision and a local (in relative terms) exam centre base.</li> </ol>

<p><b><u>Brain injury trainer consultation</u></b> For the Head of Residential to support my undertaking a consultation with the Inset trainer in my next visit, and to retain any training materials for me to review.</p>	<p><b><u>Response</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mark will be updated on INSET training received by the Brain injury trainer.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Verification in this visit</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During this visit it was made clear that owing to the provider not being able to attend as planned, the training has been moved to January 2025. I intend to follow this up in my next visit after the Christmas break.</li> </ul>
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<p><b><u>Family Support and Liaison</u></b> For the Head of Residential to ensure that an update on the ongoing support for the recent leaver that has no place as yet is available in my next visit, and to consider the feedback from the parent that I spoke to as detailed in the consultations section of this report.</p>	<p><b><u>Response</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mark will be provided with an update regarding our recent leaver.</li> <li>2. Mark will also be updated on photos being shared with family and routines.</li> <li>3. Mark will be shown the work and support the Therapist’s, Music Therapist and Habilitation Specialist provide to the staff and young people. How we work on independence for all our young people.</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Verification in this visit</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. During this visit I was informed that the former boarder has now moved into supported housing near to their family and has begun attending college undertaking life skills study. This is a positive development.</li> <li>2. The Head of Residential informed me, in part related to feedback received from a parent in my last visit, there has been consideration given to the use of and access to earwig for parents as well as staff. This has seen a regular feature of the uploading of photos on a weekly basis and parents sent hard copies. This is connected to the increase in boarding for some residents, and showcases a reciprocal setup that is mutually supportive and connected clearly to the illustration of progress and EHCP annual reviews. This is a very positive reflection.</li> <li>3. The Head of Residential and I agreed that there would be a piece of work undertaken to enable me to review this work as part of my next visit: term 3.</li> </ol>
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**How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.**

The Head of Residential informed me that there have been no issues of concern internally or requiring the support of external agencies related to the boarding cohort since my last visit in term 1. The detail present in the care planning and risk assessment processes that I discussed with the staff that I met illustrated how detailed and transparent the processes at Linden Lodge are. There is a professional challenge built in to processes that means that safeguarding processes are central and each member of staff is encouraged to challenge and question at all times.

As a result, I have no concerns and remain of the opinion that safeguarding practices are strong at Linden Lodge.

<b>Mandatory Areas</b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes</b> 20.9	<p>During this visit the Residential Lead explained that there have again been no missing episodes and no exclusions since the last Standard 3 visit in term 1.</p> <p>Attendance figures since my last visit in term 6 have averaged at 92.4% for boarders, with a corresponding figure for day pupils of 83.3%. These attendance figures remain more positive for boarders, indicating that boarding helps to increase attendance.</p>
<b>Complaints</b> 19.1, 19.2, 19.3	<p>The Head of Residential informed me that there have been no complaints since the date of my last visit in term 1 of last year. The feedback that I have gathered as part of this visit verifies the positive interaction between the residential service, and in particular the way in which families have recently felt very well supported in the way the early stages of Residential support and transitions are managed.</p>
<b>Sanctions</b> 20.6	<p>I was once again informed that there have been no sanctions applied since my last visit in term 1. The time I spent in the boarding space alongside staff and boarders illustrated the way support is offered, the positive relationships and a very happy atmosphere. My view remains that this prevents the circumstances where sanctions may be needed.</p>
<b>Restraint (including restrictive interventions)</b> 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7	<p>I was once again informed that there have been no incidents since my last visit in term 1 that have required any restraint or restrictive intervention. I consider the likelihood of this taking place to remain virtually nil based on this visit and the high level of interaction and mutual respect that exists between staff and residents.</p>
<b>Health and Safety: Risk Assessment and Fire System Tests</b>	<p>During this visit I undertook a discussion with the Head of Residential related to Fire Safety checks and systems. There are Fire Drills undertaken every half term, and all alarms are tested weekly on a Friday and recorded. I was also informed that the Fire Alarm was triggered recently and this led to a very positive visit from the Fire Brigade with the Residential Block used as a 'Holding Zone'.</p> <p>They toured the site for familiarity reasons and since this, the Residential Leaders have become Keyholders for the entire site based upon recommendation to do so to enable building access overnight if there is an issue. This was described as being used as a 'social story in action' for the residents – which is a hugely positive move.</p> <p>I agreed to undertake a full consultation with the Site Manager related to Fire Risk records during my next visit in term 3.</p>
<b>Risk Assessments</b> Appendix B (11,16)	<p>During this visit I undertook a triangulated consultation with several key leaders related to care planning and risk assessment processes. The staff shared their processes and reflected upon the newest boarders that have started attending the Residential Service as a means to support this.</p>
<b>Placement Plans</b> 7.2	<p>The two most recently arrived boarders are having their plans and risk assessment folders created by the Deputy Residential Childcare Manager and the newest of the Team Leaders. They are cross referenced and checked by each other and the Head of Residential. This triangulated process sees them each check and challenge each other's work in a supportive and unthreatening way that leads to a very comprehensive level of detail that is understood by all.</p>

Checks are then undertaken 6 times a year with a fully signed and audited checklist that verifies that all staff have read and acknowledged the changes at all times. There is also a newly added section that was highlighted to me in this visit that sees staff list and detail 'support throughout the night', that is in addition to the am and pm routines that has always been present, and strong. This new section is bespoke to each and very helpful for staff working overnight in helping and understanding the needs of the boarders.

This scrutiny illustrates that the processes and application of them is extremely strong and surpasses the requirements of the minimum standards significantly in my view.

### **Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.**

During this Standard 3 visit I undertook a full tour of the Residential Provision at Richley House and noted that the decoration scheme with a border that was new on the ground floor in the last visit has been supplemented with an Apricot feature decorative band scheme on the first floor.

I also visited the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor that had been a part of the Residential setup formerly that is now an accessible teaching space and hosted homework club during this visit for two of the boarders during this evening.

The entrance hall area contained a space display and a lovely range of Christmas decorations. The Head of Residential also explained and showed me a new system in use in the various spaces that has equipment that utilises a 'pen friend' approach to support boarders. This is an electronic reader that gives support with accessing day to day appliances and identifying other key features that support independence. This is a very useful and simple system. Not all boarders have the need for this but those that do are using it. The Residential space is very tidy and well maintained, and the communal setup of the tables supports interaction very well. The recreational spaces are well stocked, and well used (and I saw this in the time that I spent in the Residential Space).

### **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, Head of Residential and Deputy Residential Childcare Manager.**

During this visit I spoke for a period of time at the start with the 3 key leaders regarding a range of elements that are covered in the context section above and touched upon in the mandatory sections, and we also covered the areas that had been sent to me as responses to the last visit as detailed above.

The Head of Residential informed me that onward movement for some boarders includes an organisation called the Seashell Trust that takes a number of students as the next provision. A part of this discussion entailed reflection upon the variability of approaches to the sustaining of residential schools across a number of counties and local authorities. I explained my recent experiences in the light of the fact that I support schools across 6 different regions and declining support in some is seeing movement of boarders to some specialist providers (Linden Lodge among them), but also that this is not the case everywhere.

The Leaders of the Residential Setup are passionate about the importance of the Residential experience and we discussed the importance of evidence collection and the EHCP process that sees this evidence utilised to demonstrate impact. This is a key area for the drawing together of the advances made by pupils across the full Linden Lodge experience and has been important in securing funding for boarding on a number of occasions recently. The leaders are proactive and ensure that they are supportive in the way they help families plan for the future provision and onward success.

### **Time spent with Boarders and Staff in this visit**

In this visit I spent time with boarders and staff on both floors in the Residential space. I was greeted warmly by all that I met and observed and chatted to boarders and staff about recent events and some that are planned.

One boarder was preparing for his trip to the shops with staff, and being supported in this by a member of the Therapy team (Speech and Language). I spoke to this staff member about her work in general as well (captured below). The boarder was very keen to showcase his independent clearing up after snacks and talked us through how he navigates the space with his visual impairment.

Other boarders were occupied with sensory play on the ground floor, and supported by staff. The first floor occupants were talking to staff and planning their evening. Several then moved to different areas of the Residential space to play games with staff or to tidy their room. There was a clear plan to continue with the creation of Christmas decorations later in the evening as well. Two were taking part in Homework club on the second floor, and when I visited this the peripatetic teacher explained what had been being taught (IT ctrl functions and formatting of documents), the boarders were able to explain their learning well. This space is very close to the residential floors and illustrates the way the school has adapted the use of buildings in recent years to the benefit of all pupils and boarders.

I enjoyed the time I spent with the boarders and staff as it showcased their harmony when together. It affirmed the fact that boarding is a positive experience that supports attendance and learning.

### **Consultations with staff members**

#### **(1) Recently Appointed Team Leader**

As part of this visit I had arranged to meet with the recently appointed team leader, who explained that she is enjoying her new role and the extra duties that come under it. We discussed her employment history with several periods in residential special schools, and community social care roles. Her family life has seen her move between different aspects of social care but the flexibility of the sector has seen this possible and her experience is vast as a result.

She explained that she has worked at Linden Lodge for around 4 years and very much enjoys the job. The new role involves more hours, but these are strategically used to see her observe the boarders in school time as well and this adds to her understanding of their needs. This has been very useful in the key area of plan creation that is described higher up this report and is supported by interactions with teachers and therapists as well.

The key reflection for me was over the fact that this staff member has a wealth of experience within Linden Lodge and in the community, is well qualified and brings a level of measured, calm composure to the role that is of enormous benefit to the organisation as a whole. The staff team is increasingly well qualified and has an embedded experience bank that means they bring this to bear for the betterment of the care that takes place.

#### **(2) Speech and Language Therapist**

The therapist that I spoke to explained that her role supports the 24 hour curriculum across school and residential time. She explained the importance of trips such as the visit to the shops that she was supporting. These are examples of taking specific skills that have been worked upon in school into the community. She explained it as generalising communication skills in real life situations.

She went on to explain the work that takes place involves collaborating with a range of professionals including Occupational Therapists to prepare the pupils for real life settings. The boarder then left and went into the local community with the staff support. This example of supportive working demonstrated how the residential setting is a part of the wider support network and is used to build resilient life skills on a daily basis.

The staff that I spent time with in this visit were both examples of professionals with high standards that are important features of the work that the school, and the Residential Service bring to bear on the experiences of the boarders. Their focus is clear; create the best experience that you can for all learners/boarders.

### **Parent Consultation of two recently started boarders**

During the period following this visit I contacted the parents of two recently started boarders, and I was able to speak to both. The parents in question explained that the boarders have both been attending the school for a very long time (13 and 10 years respectively), and that they are both very happy with the level of support in place generally in the school over that time. Both also confirmed that boarding has been very recently started.

There is a great deal of common ground in the rationale for boarding for these two young people that are both reaching the end of the formal part of key stage 4. The key areas of development were identified as being to be able to live in a way that is not dependent as much on their family (parents/grandparents) and to give an indication of if they would be able to accept this in time. This is clearly with an eye on the future for both boarders and has an eye on possible future supported living away from the family situation. One parent detailed that there had been a very protracted struggle to secure funding for the residential provision at the level it now is, but that this is greatly appreciated, as well as the support from the school to see this secured. One of the parents also explained that the longer term picture of independence skills is a key feature of the reasons for the boarding experience and cited dressing, cooking, social skills and self-confidence as key indicators in this area.

Both parents that were spoken to were full of praise for the experience so far (it has been a matter of weeks of boarding to date) and they explained a very supportive and comprehensive transition process with extended visits in the school day being an important element. There has been a gradually increased level of exposure and the involvement of the habilitation team has been enormously helpful as well. Both parents explained that the residential experience has been very positive so far. They both also expressed the view that the boarders have shown that they are enjoying the experience a great deal. Different examples of how this was evident were cited as befits the different means of communications that the boarders possess, but it has been noted by the families that the experience has had a positive impact in a short space of time.

Staff were praised very highly by both families and the levels of communication from a range of specifically named staff were clearly stated. This was echoed by the fact that neither family had any concerns at all over the residential experience and could only say very positive things. This is a sign that each family receives the best start to the boarding experience.

### **Staff Survey**

The survey that was shared with me in this visit is an overwhelmingly positive snapshot of the views of the staff body. This illustrates that staff are responding with almost total unanimity that they are proud to work at Linden Lodge's Residential setup. They also state that children are safe and that staff are well trained regarding safeguarding, behaviour is well managed, individual needs are well catered for, there is clarity of understanding over what aims are being sought, and that leadership is strong. The strength of this survey shows that the staff team are a body that is unified in pursuing the aims as enshrined in the statement of purpose and reflects very positively overall.

Thematic Areas		
Standard/SCCIF Reference	Evidence / Observation	
	None undertaken at this visit.	
Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision		
<p>This was a further very positive visit to Linden Lodge and there were many examples of high quality care on display. This ranged from the more obvious visible positive relationships in place, and the very high quality paperwork, across to the extremely positive feedback received when I spoke to parents in the days after the visit.</p> <p>The leaders and staff that I met once again showed their determination to take on board all critique to maintain and improve the care and progress made by the boarders. The complementary work between the residential team, teaching staff, therapists and associated professionals are very much appreciated by the boarders and families.</p> <p>I would like to thank everyone at Linden Lodge for their ongoing warm welcome during my visits and I am looking forward to my next visit already. I wish everyone a restful and happy Christmas Break .</p>		
<p><b>Name: Mark Goode</b>                      <b>Date: 13/12/2024</b></p>		
RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><b><u>Health and Safety Checks: Specifically, Fire Safety Records</u></b>  For the Site Manager to be available in my next visit and for fire safety records to be made available for a discussion and check.</p> <p><b><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): How well children are helped and protected</u></b>  Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children. Highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the school.</p>	<p>Premises Manager, informed and will have records available.</p>	
<p><b><u>Habilitation Team Support work</u></b>  For the Head of Residential Care to organise work related to the impact of the Habilitation team, and for a consultation in my next visit to support this.</p> <p><b><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The overall experiences and progress of children</u></b>  The experience of staying at the school enhances children's life opportunities. For children with the most complex needs, staff are able to evidence the sustained benefit they have had in making a difference to the lives of children in their care.</p>	<p>Mark will be shown how Habilitation, work and support the young people and staff.</p> <p>Mark will be shown and Case study of impact, and benefits of boarding for young people with most complex needs.</p>	

<p><b><u>Staff Inset Review</u></b> For details of planned Brain Injury Inset to be shared with me in my next visit.</p> <p><b><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The effectiveness of leaders and managers</u></b> 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>Mark will be given an update on the training, staff will receive in January 2025.</p>	
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Head of Residential's Comments
<p>Thank you, Mark, so much for your positive feedback in the report. I really appreciate the details you have included about areas we have developed and continue to develop. Thank you for the time you spent, with the young people and staff. The feedback from parents will be shared with staff. We look forward to your next visit.</p>
<p><b>Name: Danny Sinclair</b></p>
<p><b>Date: 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024</b></p>

Head Teachers' Comments
<p>It is incredibly useful to have the view of an independent and objective professional with so much experience in residential but also schools. This supports our residential team incredibly well to be able to take a step back and see through different eyes. Although it is so beneficial to see that what we are doing is recognised as positive, high quality, effective, and most importantly safe.</p>
<p><b>Name: Sarah Norris</b></p>
<p><b>Date: 19 December 2024</b></p>

Formal Response from the Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school
<p>It is helpful for Governors to read this report and to see evidence that plans made in consultation with the Independent Visitor (IV) are monitored and progress is achieved.</p> <p>This is another positive report. It is helpful to read that the IV can provide evidence that children at Richley House are safe and they are well cared for. There is helpful evidence of good interactions between staff and residents as well as evidence of positive feedback from parents. The IV report provides evidence of improvement to the physical condition of Richley House and those improvements help residents build their independence.</p> <p>The evidence suggests that Residents are aware of the purpose and function of the IV and they might approach the IV for assistance is that was necessary.</p> <p>The report is well written and the findings are supported by clear evidence.</p> <p>Governors want to add their appreciation of the work and dedication described by the IV to ensure Residents are Richley House continue to be safe, well cared for while they build their independence.</p>
<p><b>Name: Kieran Travers &amp; Winnie Williams</b></p>
<p><b>Date: Jan 2025</b></p>