

Standard 20 Visit

Name of Service	Linden Lodge School
Date of previous visit	16.03.22 Term 4
Date of this visit	24.04.22 Term 5
Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	14.15
Visit Announced or Unannounced?	Unannounced

About the Independent Visitor

Visiting the residential provision today is Mark Goode. Mark has worked in the Education sector for the past 23 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 Inspector 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.

Introduction

As the Standard 20 Independent Visitor I will undertake checks on the School's records of:

- Attendance, Complaints, Sanctions, Use of Physical Intervention, Risk Assessments, Individual Care Plans for Children

There is also an intention to review other thematic areas:

- The evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and how well they are safeguarded.
- An assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture, and equipment of the School.

On 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.

Context

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 currently has a roll of 146 pupils having risen from 143 at the time of the last Standard 20 visit in term 4. The residential provision, which is spread across three floors with differing levels of support in place determined by need, can accommodate 24 weekly or part-time boarders (Monday to Friday). Residential placements are designed as an integral part of each child's specific educational and social programme, forming a 'waking day' curriculum, which considers their sensory impairment, physical disabilities, emotional well-being and medical needs, enabling them to develop to their full potential. At the time of this visit there were 20 boarders in the residential accommodation with a recent rise from 18. As the pandemic has developed recently, and restrictions in society have lifted, there are now signs of the operations at Linden Lodge returning slowly to a form of normality. There have been some fears expressed by the school community and as such the pace of change is slow. As a result, mask use is still in place, and Covid testing takes place now only when there are symptoms evident in anybody. Bedroom occupancy is still organised as a single room policy, and it is intended that this will remain the case until the end of term six to help pupils and staff to retain a sense of calm, and to enable planning for September, and a return to what was in place before Covid to be gradual. Having toured the residential provision twice now, I judge this to be both sensible and advisable.


Since the last Standard 20 visit, there have been two new boarders transitioning into rooms in the middle floor in a bespoke fashion. The school operates an information gathering exercise and creates a bespoke plan for transition. The Head of Care explained that the pace of this transition for one of these two young people has been faster than in some cases, and whilst this caused a degree of concern initially, the methods used to gather information and the depth of understanding gained by staff has seen plans accelerated and a high number of evenings per week accessed quite early in the boarding process. After a reversal in the supporting authority's decision not to fund boarding, this then happened in a fashion that has supported the family and had the impact wished for; a very happy boarder. The Head of Care was strident in stating that, had needs been of a more severe degree, then the pace would have been slower, and there is always the option to adjust boarding periods as this is the nature of the boarding offer. Parents are aware of this possibility (however slight) and are on standby. A second new boarder has been undertaking tea visits following a transition to local authority adult services. This has seen a supported transition alongside school staff (similar to the previously mentioned new boarder) and has been prefaced by attendance at after school clubs, and getting to know boarding staff. These processes show that high levels of thought and individualised planning go into transitions and admissions to boarding, and this is both worthy of high praise and leads to the positive relationships that are referenced later in this report.

At my first Standard 20 visit in term 4, the Headteacher and I agreed that part of the use of the process would be targeted at supporting the Head of Care to move the residential provision towards achieving Outstanding status as soon as possible related to the areas for improvement in the OFSTED report, and using the Outstanding criteria in the Social Care Common Inspection Framework, and in this report this continues to be the case. With this in mind, upon arrival at the residential provision there was a team leaders and senior staff meeting taking place and I sat in to the end of this session. The focus of the meeting was centred around making improvements to supervision processes (as identified in the OFSTED report), and also linked to planning for the upcoming platinum Jubilee celebrations (that are a central part of the developing use of the 'Tapestry' system. I have included more detail on this meeting later in this report.

During this Standard 20 visit I was informed of the imminent retirement of the Headteacher. I would like to wish her well, and offer to support the transition period for the new Headteacher, when appointed, through these Standard 20 visits.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Actions	Comments from Provider	Verified by Independent Visitor
<p><u>Risk Assessments and Care Planning</u> To consider inserting an additional section in the care plan introduction section related to key risks for each pupil and suggested staff actions by term 5.</p> <p><i>SCCIF Outstanding Criteria: 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</i></p>	<p>Individual Care Plans – All About Me are reviewed July/September then shared with parents. Adding a section outlining key risks would be very beneficial. The section has been added to our template ready for reviews later next term.</p>	<p>During the visit it was evident that this has been put in place and that the Head of Care is delivering a template for this that others will follow. This was greeted enthusiastically at a management meeting that I attended in the visit. This comprised of the Head of Care, the Deputy Heads of Care and Team leader.</p>
<p><u>Medication Audits</u> Embed the recently introduced weekly medication checks. By term 5</p> <p><i>SCCIF Outstanding Criteria: Leaders and Managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.</i></p>	<p>In response to the recent inspection recommendation weekly medication audits are taking place. Checks are completed by the Head and Deputy Head of Care with support from the Clinical Lead.</p>	<p>These happen weekly and are fitted in as an unannounced activity. No concerns have been uncovered so far in the now weekly checks that are made and they are viewed as being an important part of eliminating complacency.</p>
<p><u>Record Keeping of Impact on Life Opportunities</u> Conduct an evaluation of the use of the Tapestry system with the support of Governors if possible, to enable the journeys of pupils to be captured fully from start to finish, demonstrating the sustained impact boarding has by term 6.</p> <p><i>SCCIF Outstanding Criteria: 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.</i></p>	<p>Tapestry has enabled us to build a record of young people's experiences, development and journey in residential. Tapestry continues to be embedded into practice with the next phase sharing access with parents taking place Term 5 2022.</p> <p>An evaluation of the system will be arranged with our parent Governor next term.</p>	<p>The Head of Care explained that parental contact is to be made and teams meetings with parents to inform them that live sharing of Tapestry records will begin from 9th May. This is also to be added to the timetable of the Jubilee celebrations on the 2nd June to raise awareness of Tapestry, and will be followed by a QA survey that will evaluate the opinions of parents. The independent visitor will then be able to review the results in the Standard 20 visit in term 6.</p>

	The overall experiences and progress of children and young people (This will be a review of thematic areas and/ or direct observation of childcare practice and systems)
<p>Placement Updates:</p>  <p><u>SCCIF Outstanding Criteria:</u> <i>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.</i></p>	<p>As evidenced in the attendance figures provided for this Standard 20 Visit, there is significant statistical evidence underpinning the fact that becoming a part of the boarding community at Linden Lodge leads to an increase in attendance in school generally, and clearly this leads to greater opportunities for progress to be made.</p> <p>During this Standard 20 visit I shared time on all floors with one of the Deputy Heads of Care. Throughout this I saw, and was participant in, multiple examples of a close working relationship. During this tour the Deputy Head of Care was touching in with all of the young people in boarding for the evening, and making sure activities were taking place that met their needs. It was a chance to check on the welfare of all boarders and clarify that all staff were clear on the purpose of activities, relevance to individual boarders' targets, and was also used as a chance to deepen the close bond that is clearly in place between the Deputy Head of Care and all boarders.</p> <p>The boarders' reactions to the staff in this tour was joyous. On the ground floor (where boarders have extremely high levels of need, and most are non-verbal), there was a greater emphasis on tactile communication. The chance was taken to capture a high need boarder operating their own pouring and drinking task independently using an iPad, and the Tapestry system. This was an unspoken act by a staff member that was attached to the boarder, saw the Deputy Head of Care managing and supporting the activity, and then simply went to record the process without being instructed to do so. This was impressive and illustrated the embedded nature of the use of the technology to capture the way that staff support and targets are helping to make a real difference to the capacity of the boarders to manage their own lives.</p> <p>On the first floor I was introduced to several young boarders with visual impairments, and saw at close quarters how targets and homework from school were being used to aid development for both in a very bespoke fashion. The two boarders were using braille aids to navigate learning tasks. One explained that they were using braille to develop Spanish language skills and we discussed how this was done. This boarder was very happy in boarding, and told me that the time spent there was valuable to them very eloquently.</p> <p>On the second floor (where boarders have the highest level of independence), I was treated to a tour of the floor by a very enthusiastic boarder (once again with a quite severe visual impairment). This boarder greeted me enthusiastically, showed me around the whole floor including all bathrooms, and bedrooms. It was evident how closely knit the community is, and how much the boarders all respect and value each other.</p> <p>The staff also explained that recently they have been taking boarders back into the community, including visiting the local shops. I saw evidence of this in folders, and it was clear that the reflections of boarders show that this was greeted with enthusiasm after a long time not being able to do it.</p>

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

Standards: 11, 15.1, 15.3

The Head of Care reported that since the last Standard 20 visit there has been a matter discussed at the weekly safeguarding meetings related to a boarder that turned 18 years old, and events at home that have led to the boarder moving out of the family home and into supported accommodation. The DSL and the safeguarding team of the school have been working closely with the local authority safeguarding team in raising concerns about aspects of these events. The manner of this work and the proactive reporting that has taken place from the school has been strong practice. Given the nature of the events, the independent visitor gave advice that a priority that might be pursued would be to ensure that, in spite of the concerns over the manner of the change into supported living for the boarder, a positive outcome in terms of the ongoing relationship between the boarder and their parent be maintained if possible.

There was further discussion around the weekly medication audits that have been taking place since the OFSTED inspection's recommendations and the fact that no issues are being detected. I remain confident that safeguarding systems are well designed and implemented to ensure pupils thrive in a nurturing and secure environment. This is further backed up in the warm and comfortable relationships between boarders and staff that I witnessed in my visit. This is a clear indication of an environment where safeguarding is always at the forefront of staff practice and translates into a secure environment.

Mandatory Areas

Topic

Comments

**Records of attendance/
exclusion/ missing episodes**
12.8, 15.6

The Head of Care explained that there have again been no missing episodes and no exclusions since the last independent visit that took place in term 4. The secure premises, high levels of attention to detail in all aspects of care, high staff : pupil ratio, and the extremely attentive relationships that I witnessed lead to a sense of family, and genuine care of a very high standard. It was very clear that staff, at all levels, really know their boarders, and that the boarders feel valued and nurtured. There was a real mixture of activities on display that reflected the different interests of the boarders, as well as their varied needs and in all cases, there was a feeling of joy that was palpable.

Attendance figures in this period showed that attendance for boarding students is running at 94.3% (slightly up on term 4), compared to the whole school figure of 88.7%. Unauthorised absence for the school is running at a very low 0.37%, with boarding at an impressive 0%. Authorised absence currently sits at 11.25% for the whole school, with the boarding figure at 5.7%. These figures, once again, illustrate a positive impact upon attendance for pupils that attend the boarding provision. This was then backed up in a parental consultation when one of the parents commented that, on boarding days, their child was up early and always enthusiastic to attend, whereas on non-boarding days this was far less so.

Complaints 18	<p>The Head of Residential Care confirmed that once again there have been no complaints since the last Standard 20 visit. Parental consultations undertaken illustrated that strong communication, availability, approachability and a genuine sense of being transparent contribute very significantly to a mutual understanding between parents and staff. They really do work together to the benefit of the boarders. The rare occasions when issues arise are therefore managed in a proactive fashion.</p>
Sanctions 12	<p>The Head of Care explained that there have been no sanctions required or applied since the last Standard 20 visit. The boarders seen in the evening session were happy and keen to chat to me and this is indicative of a harmonious operation where needs are well met, and therefore any need for sanctions is precluded. The nature of the disabilities of the boarders means that there will be glitches from time to time, but when these occur the solid relationships that are developed over time are maintained through regular contact, including with boarders when they are absent. This includes Zoom contacts during public celebrations if a boarder is absent.</p>
Physical Intervention 12	<p>There have been no incidents requiring physical intervention since the last Standard 20 visit, and the boarders have undertaken several expansive activities recently that have been as a result of the drive towards returning to more 'normal' operations. This has included visits to local shops (for the first time in close to two years), and a fun Easter Egg hunt. These have been a success and have pointed to careful management. In essence there have been activities that, given the nature of disability inherent in the boarders, could lead to sensory overload and potentially a need to use physical measures to ensure safety – but this has simply not been the case. A further signal of strong management and great care being taken.</p>
Risk Assessments 5.1, 6.3, 10.2, 15.9	<p>The detailed risk assessments that the school hold remain strong documents, and as the Covid restrictions are beginning to be relaxed, the risk assessments for new pupils are not being written to contain the additional elements linked to Covid as this has had the impact of making rooms feel more sanitised than homely. As stated elsewhere in this report, with the restrictions being slowly and carefully removed, the programme of regular review of risk assessments is being done in such a way as to reduce these Covid elements sequentially in preparation for September.</p> <p>As recommended in the last Standard 20 visit, a section in the overall planning document that highlights 'key information and risks' is being included on a rolling programme.</p>
Care Plans 10.2, 21	<p>The detailed care plans contained in the 'all about me' folder for each boarder remain in place and are thorough, containing a very helpful summary at the front. The connection to the Tapestry system is under review and will become more visible in the coming weeks as the parents all get access to Tapestry in May. During the visit it was evident that the key information section that was recommended in the term 4 visit is happening, and this will make information somewhat simpler to view, particularly for any agency staff. The team meeting I attended saw this discussed at length and the key staff are whole heartedly behind this process.</p>

Premises

Standards: 6, 7, 15.12

In this Standard 20 Visit I toured the premises in its entirety and I am pleased to report that all three floors are suitably furnished, spacious, light and airy. The resources on hand are organised carefully with the interests and needs of the residents in mind. This means that, as different needs are serviced, there are very different designs in the layouts between the floors, however all three floors are carefully laid out and well used by staff to support boarders. All boarders' needs mean that there is often a need for 'trial and error' in activities and some resultant clear up is often required, but again, the necessary means to do this is stored readily at hand and is used as needed constantly.

Bedrooms are personalised, and appropriately furnished. Bathrooms are clean and safe. Where required there are low level beds that are intended as safe zones, but on upper floors bedrooms are suited to the intention of independent living. A new boarder that is in the process of joining the boarding provision has meant a room has been repurposed since my last visit, and the room in question has therefore changed a lot in design to make its use appropriate for the boarders' needs. The fact that their eyesight is currently in a state of slow deterioration has meant that the design of the bedroom is taking this into account.

I was also shown an outdoor balcony space in this visit on the first floor that has resources built into it to support activities in the fresh air. The area is used appropriately when the weather is deemed to be reasonable, and the staff explained that multiple different activities take place there, such as messy play. This is a most useful space.

The Head of Care explained to me at this visit that electrical blinds for the ground floor are on order to enhance the experience of the boarders, and that a programme of enhancement to the reception area and foyer had taken place. This has been a major refit and has improved the area significantly. It was suggested by the Head Teacher that my next Standard 20 visit could be used as an opportunity to review the ongoing premises development programme and undertake a health and safety visit. I intend to cover this in my term 6 visit.

Consultations Supporting this Visit.

Standards: 2,13.

Consultation 1: Standard 2 - Induction, transition and individual support

During this Standard 20 visit I contacted a sample of two parents to get their views on the boarding provision on offer at Linden Lodge. This was undertaken with the support of the Headteacher and the Head of Care. The parents spoken to both have a long term relationship with the school in that the boarders have been attending for a number of years. As such the relationships with the staff are very well established between both boarders and their parents.

Both parents were very keen to stress that the provision on offer meets the needs of their children very well. They both independently stated that they feel that attendance at Linden Lodge has helped them to become who they now are. They both spoke of the range of opportunities that are available through boarding, the supportive team of staff around them, and that the boarding provision has prevented them from being isolated. One parent stated that on boarding days there was a noticeable spring in the step of their child, demonstrating their keenness to get to school, with the other commenting that boarding had 'changed everything' and they wished they had done it sooner.

Both parents commented upon the high quality of communication between the boarding staff and home. One stressed the personal attention as being very helpful, with high praise for individual boarding staff members, and

both explained that regular calls and updates have been greatly appreciated over time. They both stated that staff were always available if contact is made.

In terms of the impact of the boarding provision on family life, both parents called were very frank about the fact that access to boarding has had a deep impact upon home life. They were both clear in expressing that the boarder in question had shown a visible increase in confidence, and felt a 'part of something' that had simply not been possible for them in their previous (mainstream) schools. Boarding has impacted upon the capacity to feel independent, being able to relate to peers and developing a sense of self. In addition, both were keen to stress the impact on home life for other siblings and upon helping them manage the continuity of home life as parents.

When asked if there were any concerns about the provision, both stated that they have never had any. They both commented that the primary impact of boarding has been to make their child happier, and make visible progress in a wide range of ways.

In summary, the parents spoken to give high praise to the school, and the impact of boarding in particular. The phrase 'life changing' comes to mind, and it is clear that the parents value the work undertaken by the staff extremely highly. They were both very happy to have been contacted to give their views over a service that they described as having made an amazing difference.

Consultation 2: Standard 13: Leadership and Management: Governance

As a second consultation in this Standard 20 Visit, I spoke to an enthusiastic Parent Governor related to Governance at the school, and boarding in particular. The conversation covered a range of areas and began with the governor explaining that they had been involved in the trial of parental access to the Tapestry system and that they were impressed with its potential, although it was not yet as full of content as it could be. There was a minor concern expressed related to the impact it has on staff workload, particularly alongside other existing systems. As the independent visitor I explained that I shared this concern, and reflected upon the view that I hold that the governing body could be more involved and review this system alongside the Head of Care, and in the context of the impending retirement of the Headteacher, and the search for a replacement.

The governor expressed the view that the governing body as a whole may not be as aware of these developments as they could, and that boarding does not necessarily receive as high a priority in the governing body meetings as it might. As the independent visitor I reflected that governing body involvement in the review of the Tapestry system would be very helpful.

In terms of concerns from the governor related to boarding, there was little of concern noted. The governor stated that they were keen to see any safeguarding issues used as a means to learn lessons (close shaves etc), and that this method is seen as good practice in general. They also stated that they intend to attend boarding more often now that the Covid Pandemic is passing. It was stated that the governing body will be approached regarding having more of an emphasis on boarding, without being felt to be turning up in a surprise fashion. When discussing Standard 20 visits, the governor was pleased that unannounced visits were taking place, and it is clear that the method being used to support improvement through using the SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria) and the National Minimum standards is supported.

Thematic Areas : Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards

Standard	Evidence / Observation
<p>Standard 13: Leadership & Management</p> <p><u>SCCIF: (Outstanding Criteria:</u> Leaders and Managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.</p>	<p>As a part of this Standard 20 visit I was present for a section of a team meeting held by the Head of Care with two Deputy Heads of Care and a Team Leader. The areas covered in this meeting predominantly related to feedback from an audit of supervision records, and planning for the upcoming Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The work related to supervision was particularly focussed on not only the record keeping as a compliance exercise, but the quality of the supervision itself in terms of its impact on the staff and their daily work with boarders. There was also specific reference made to the focus on agency staff’s supervision being given the same priority as permanent staff. This being a piece of targeted work that supports the school in responding to the recent OFSTED inspection outcomes and recommendations.</p> <p>This was a clear demonstration of the determination of the Head of Care to ensure that all staff are fully included in processes and plans, but further to this, it was an impressive example of leadership that challenged staff in a supportive way to make sure that the staff are always supervised, and record keeping is up to the highest standards. In particular this demonstrated the fact that the Leaders are focussed on knowing their strengths and weaknesses and are comfortable with professional challenge in the name of sustaining improvement over time.</p> <p>This meeting also highlighted the work being undertaken in a collaborative fashion with education staff in the school. In this instance this was related to planning the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations, but was focussed on using the opportunity to support the developments in Tapestry recording system. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this in my term 6 visit.</p>

Summary of Visit

This has been a further inspirational visit to the boarding provision at Linden Lodge. I would like to thank the Headteacher and the Head of Residential Care, along with all the staff and pupils that I met, for such a warm welcome. I was very pleased that the staff, including the Headteacher, welcomed suggestions, and I can see very clearly that pupils’ best interests are at the centre of planning. This was particularly evident in my tour of the provision in the company of the Deputy Head of Care. The change from one Headteacher to the next is always a challenge, and I look forward to supporting the Head of Care in this process, and continuing to develop my relationship with the staff.

I am very much looking forward to my next visit already, and I would like to take this opportunity to wish the departing Headteacher a well-deserved retirement. The school has solid foundations for moving forward, and I hope that the process we have begun together will see my visits used to support the school as it moves forward under new leadership

Name: Mark Goode **Date:** 29.04.22

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT

Actions	Comments from Provider	Date to be completed by
<p><u>Record Keeping of Impact on Life Opportunities:</u></p> <p>Continue the work related to the evaluation of the use of the Tapestry system as a means of capturing the sustained impact boarding has. (Carried over from term 4 visit, as the time frame was term 6), with Governors' support if possible.</p> <p><i>SCCIF Outstanding Criteria: 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.</i></p>	<p>We continue to roll out Tapestry as a platform to record and capture achievements and participation of young people. Our next phase enabling parents/careers to have access is underway with a completion date of May 13th 2022.</p> <p>Parent Governor Martin Schouter fully supports Tapestry and was part of our first phase. He has reported having access to daily updates as invaluable to his son's progress.</p> <p>A parental Quality Assurance survey is planned June 2022.</p>	<p>Term 6 2022</p>
<p><u>Governing body oversight:</u></p> <p>Ensure that monitoring of the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school is discussed and given a sufficiently high profile. This seems to be of particular importance at present given the impending search for a new Headteacher.</p> <p><i>SCCIF Outstanding Criteria: 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.</i></p>	<p>The Clinical Governance committee meet on a termly basis. Residential will submit a report detailing quality of care, assurance and safeguarding.</p>	<p>Term 1 2022-23</p>

Provider's Comments

Name: Jhenni Izquierdo, Head of Residential Care

Jhenni Izquierdo

Date: 10-05-2022

Name: Deborah Rix, Headteacher

Date: