



Standard 20 Visit

Name of Service	Linden Lodge School
Date of previous visit	24.04.22 Term 5
Date of this visit	06.07.22 Term 6
Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	13.00
Visit Announced or Unannounced?	Announced

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. Since the last Standard 20 visit there have been no new boarders arrive, but there has been an extended process of transition undertaken for a new boarder with extremely complex and detailed needs that has been based at home for approximately three years. The detail of this discussion is covered in more depth in the placement updates section of this report.

During this Standard 20 visit I met with the Head of Care extensively, and undertook meetings with a visiting Social Worker and a team of staff related to premises and Health and Safety oversight for the school, and as part of that, the boarding provision. The records of these meetings are included in this report. In addition, I met with the outgoing Headteacher, and one of the newly appointed Co-Headteachers, with specific responsibility for boarding. During this meeting there was a chance to reflect upon the work undertaken on my Standard 20 visits so far, and to reaffirm some parts of the intention of such visits as the school and the boarding provision enters a new phase under the new arrangements. From September 2022 the school will be led by two Co-Headteachers with discreet responsibility for the school and the boarding provision. The outgoing Headteacher explained to me that the intention was to adapt the school improvement plan and, for the purposes of ensuring ongoing development of the boarding provision, sought my view on the method to use. As the Standard 20 visits have been designed around using the 'Outstanding Criteria' of the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) to support the Head of Care following the recent OFSTED inspection, it was suggested that designing an improvement plan for boarding around the SCCIF would be sensible.

During my time with the Head of Care there was also discussion around the fact that the nominated Governor for the boarding provision is moving on from the post. This was discussed in the context of the move from the existing National Minimum Standards (2015) to the newer version that takes effect on 5th September 2022. In particular the details of the new 'Standard 3' that concerns the role of independent visitors (and the role of the school and governing body relating to them). The Head of Care was advised that it is considered important to ensure this change is highlighted to the governing body, and that the support provided to the boarding provision matches these requirements. The Head of Care shared with me a recently submitted report to Governors that covers key developments and next steps very clearly. It is suggested that the governing body would benefit from identifying a new link member for boarding as soon as possible, and their involvement in any action planning will be very helpful.


In our discussions, the Head of Care also explained the work that is taking place related to Key Workers. The model used at Linden Lodge is designed around a sensibly constructed 'circle-model' of supervision that sees each pupil allocated to a staff member, and also with an allocated Senior Staff Member (one of the Head of Care, or a Deputy). Oversight of meetings, everyday communications, individual planning and care are therefore supervised by the staff member, but the involvement of the senior staff ensures that relationships with parents have added strength. This also empowers staff development and gives backup to ensuring actions that take place are appropriate. It also means that the senior staff have clear oversight and understand the young people when involved in the creation of reports etc. The Head of Care is very passionate about remaining involved in care, and wants the same for other staff, whilst also seeing all of the team enabled to develop their skillset. This is an impressive model for general staff development and teamwork.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Actions	Comments from Provider	Verified by Independent Visitor
<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>We continue to roll out Tapestry as a platform to record and capture achievements and participation of young people. Our next phase enabling parents/carers to have access is underway with a completion date of May 13th 2022. 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>The Head of Care shared with me a recently undertaken parent survey in which there is an overwhelmingly positive response to the 'Tapestry' developments. This is covered in more depth in the consultations section of this report.</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>The Clinical Governance committee meet on a termly basis. Residential will submit a report detailing quality of care, assurance and safeguarding.</p>	<p>The Head of Care shared the fact that a report has been done and is with the governors, but that no feedback has yet been received. Discussion with the Headteacher and the newly appointed Co-Head for Boarding showcased that action planning for September onwards will be using the SCCIF and must also see the new National Minimum Standards used as a focus. These contain new expectations for oversight by the Governing Body, and advice was given as to what this means for Linden Lodge.</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)

Placement Updates:



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.

As part of this Standard 20 visit I spoke to the Head of Care extensively about the process of transition for a new boarder. The arrangements that have been made include detailed recruitment for supporting staff for both education and residential staff, all overseen by the Head of Care directly. There have been numerous meetings and visits for the family, familiarisation lessons are arranged to take place in advance of the boarder starting, and there is Music therapy arranged as well owing to the fact that this is a favourite stimulus for the boarder. The attention to detail involved in this illustrates how well planned the transition process is, and this is one of the reasons for the placements at Linden Lodge having such resilience. It sets the boarders up with a greater chance of making connections that enable them to really feel at home, and the results that I have seen in the relationships that exist between staff and boarders over the past three visits bear witness to how effective this process is.

I also spent time with the boarders and staff in this visit as a commemorative photograph was being taken. This took place outdoors in the grounds and saw boarders from all three floors in attendance, along with every staff member. In sharing this time with the boarders and staff I was able to ask questions about their welfare and enjoyment of the time they have in boarding, and without exception all were extremely positive about their boarding experience. The staff team have a warmth to them that is infectious and transmits to the boarders in a very real sense. The relationships between boarders and staff mean that movement as a group was managed seamlessly, and it is quite clear that this sort of work is constant. The results are evident; the boarders have implicit trust in staff and there exists a rare form of a family atmosphere. The taking of a photograph outdoors may seem a simple task, but the needs that the boarders have make this a logistical challenge, but the staff's effortless proactivity made it not only happen but really great fun for all. This is a clear indication to me that the ease with which boarders and staff co-exist means that it does not appear to be work – more that it was a family photograph.

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

Standards: 11, 15.1, 15.3

The Head of Care explained to me that a recent piece of work has been undertaken to create a dashboard for herself, as the Head of Care and a DSL, that triggers updates at any point when a safeguarding issue is raised as a concern in 'My Concern'. This enables the quick identification of the raising of the concern, and the capacity to share with the wider staff team. It has not been needed, but is an example of high levels of proactivity.

The Head of Care also shared the records and an internal investigation into a restraint that has taken place. The sharing was done to enable me to consider if this constituted a safeguarding concern, but it is my view that the steps taken do not mean this, and are appropriate. More detail is contained in the section of this report dedicated to physical intervention. It remains my view that safeguarding practices are strong at Linden Lodge and I have no concerns.

Mandatory Areas	
Topic	Comments
Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 12.8, 15.6	<p>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 5. The premises remain secure and the 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.</p> <p>Attendance figures in this period showed that attendance for boarding students is running at 87.7% (this is a reduction relative to term 5), compared to the whole school figure of 88.93%. Unauthorised absence for the whole school is a low 0.67% whilst boarding is 0%. Authorised absence for the whole school is 10.4% for the whole school, with the boarding figure at 12.3%.</p> <p>The Head of Care explained that the slight reduction in figures for general attendance of boarders is directly attributable to a number of senior students that have been on residential breaks or extended assessments at destination colleges. There have been some increased illness rates and one student has been unable to travel in to school due to a broken lift at home.</p> <p>Given these circumstances, the boarding attendance remains high and demonstrate that attending boarding is a positive when it comes to general attendance.</p>
Complaints 18	<p>The Head of Residential Care confirmed that once again there have been no complaints since the last Standard 20 visit. The parental survey (which is not yet complete – and is explored more in the consultations section of this report) makes plain how parents feel about the high quality of the provision and it is therefore unsurprising that there are no complaints. Parental contact and communication is given a high priority, and relations between staff and boarders’ parents are very strong.</p>
Sanctions 12	<p>The Head of Care confirmed that there have been no sanctions required or applied since the last Standard 20 visit. The interactions witnessed in this Standard 20 visit showed me that the solid foundations of all the work at Linden Lodge is the bond between staff and boarders. This means that sanctions are, and as far as I can see will remain, very unlikely.</p>
Physical Intervention 12	<p>During this Standard 20 visit the Head of Care shared very detailed accounts of a physical intervention that was required related to a boarder that was unable to stop hurting themselves when their feet started bleeding after they had picked it.</p> <p>The records that the Head of Care showed me illustrated very clearly that the intervention was only taken as a very last resort, and why it was required, and that it was maintained with minimal force and for as short a period as was absolutely necessary to prevent any further injury to the boarder, and limit risk to others. De-escalation techniques were employed and the welfare of the boarder was at the centre of all aspects of decisions made.</p>

	<p>Perhaps most impressively the Head of Care also shared an extensive paper trail that showed how the following then took place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DSL reflection and involvement. - Reflection and collaboration with parents (who were fully supportive). - Detailed reports from all staff involved. - Professional reflections from all staff involved. - Continual pupil checks. - A debrief for all staff including a ‘lessons learned’ session. - Emotional support offered for staff. - The Risk Assessment for the boarder has been updated and shared with staff. - A fully impartial and detailed investigation into the events by the Deputy Head of Care. <p>In discussion with the Head of Care, it was agreed that the Head of Care would look to consider the school restraint policy and consider if any aspects needed updating in the light of the events. An adapted form of record keeping is also being implemented following the events. Overall, the paperwork provided illustrated that extremely strong practice is in place and the manner of this piece of work illustrates how seriously the events have been taken by all staff. This is an indication of a strong culture of risk assessment and safeguarding.</p>
<p>Risk Assessments 5.1, 6.3, 10.2, 15.9</p>	<p>The detailed risk assessments that the school hold remain strong documents, and across the Summer break there is a plan to see all Risk Assessments updated, although they are always updated whenever there is a need to. The above mentioned example of the physical restraint leading to the updating of the risk assessment is a recent example and reassures me that this is endemic in practice at Linden Lodge.</p>
<p>Care Plans 10.2, 21</p>	<p>The Care Plans held for all boarders are the product of an extensive process of individualised information gathering – as explored in the section related to the transition planning that is covered earlier in this Standard 20 report.</p> <p>The Head of Care also shared with me the fact that the whole process of ‘All About Me’ is currently under review. This includes the addition of a snapshot of a summary of the key information required of the boarder on the front of the document. To make sure there is consistent practice, all allocated key workers are updating these plans at least annually, or as regularly as required after any change makes this necessary. At the point of this Standard 20 visit taking place there is an annual review underway. In line with the ‘circle model’ described in the context section of this report, the whole team of staff and leaders are involved in this process.</p>

Premises

Standards: 6, 7, 15.12

There have been no substantial changes to the organisation and equipment in place in the boarding provision. The three distinct floors remain designed and operated with the needs of the three distinct groups of boarders in mind. All three floors are carefully laid out and well used by staff to support boarders. The Head of Care reported that the electronic blinds are now installed and have had a positive impact upon the experience of the boarders.

As a part of this Standard 20 visit I also met with a team of three staff that explained to me the fashion in which the health and safety of the site, and boarding in particular is overseen, as well as how the premises team organise and implement the routine and extraordinary maintenance of the buildings and premises that is essential in a complex organisation, with multiple buildings.

I met with the Head of Premises, the Deputy Head of Residential Care, and the Habilitation Specialist for the boarding provision. They explained that, related to Health and Safety, their work ensures that the premises remain compliant and covers all aspects of the site. This ranges from issues such as fire doors being maintained and operational, to the wider environment through regular walks of the site on a rotational basis. This aspect of the work is designed to ensure that accessibility of the site is maintained for all pupils, and is based on the principle of fair access. Pupils have a range of sensory impairments and the fact that one of the staff members is visually impaired, and a former pupil, demonstrates the extent to which inclusion is a core philosophy in principle but also in practice. This proactivity in approach leads to swift action in any maintenance of the environment. The site is very rural in aspect (especially considering its location in the London area), and as such can be affected by weather changes. The staff explained how being prepared for the unexpected helps to keep things running smoothly. This has seen challenges in winter through cold and icy weather, and the unexpectedly severe storm during this academic year that caused extensive damage across England. Thankfully the staff pull together and keep the experience of the pupils at the centre of their work. The pupils are aware of whom to speak to in order to report any issues, and the staff's passion for their work is apparent. It was also explained that for pupils with sensory impairment, such challenges are viewed as a learning experience, and that graded exposure is viewed as a positive experience. The staff are primed and ready at all times to make adaptations, with reported issues undergoing a triage approach to ensure appropriate responses.

The Premises Manager also explained how the regular rotation and monthly checks are carried out as a standard function of day-to-day maintenance. A folder was shared which explained the depth and range of this work, and it is clear how well organised and rigorous this work is. The work never ends, and the development of the site sees larger maintenance and development projects carried out, wherever possible, during school breaks. Recent work has covered regular decoration, a refit of the downstairs lounge, the entrance hall area to boarding to make it more accessible, leak repairs, improvement to heating controls, 'pigeon-proofing', the removal of an Oak tree that was presenting risk, ongoing plumbing maintenance and a transition toward fully LED lighting across the site. This summer sees a focus on emergency lighting maintenance. The staff made it very plain that maintenance, health & safety and attention to detail is applied at all times. As an exercise in demonstrating oversight this was an impressive overview.

SCCIF: Outstanding Criteria; How well children are helped and protected

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.

Consultations Supporting this Visit.

Standards: 2,13.

Discussion with a visiting Social Worker

During this Standard 20 visit with a social worker that was undertaking CIN reviews on the day of my visit, as this was an opportunity to undertake some evaluation of the work carried out with partner professionals. It was explained to me that the social worker in question has several cases on roll at Linden Lodge, and we discussed two boarders in depth. The overview given to me detailed how the staff at Linden Lodge had been extremely flexible and supportive. This included enabling the social worker to undertake their work in term-time and across school holidays to organise detailed plans alongside visits, and working closely with hospital staff as required to develop transition plans. In one of the cases the social worker explained how some delays had occurred after some communication errors, but the support and flexibility of the school and boarding staff had been to adapt the plan as soon as possible. It was an important piece of work that saw the staff act in the interests of safeguarding the boarder, as well as in the wider interests of the pre-existing pupils in the residential provision. This has been very important in making sure that the school placement has been successful and has been pivotal in connecting supporting agencies, thereby improving the young person's access to general help, and has had a positive impact upon their holistic development in the school environment and at home. This aids their life chances greatly.

In further discussion around a second boarder, the social worker stated that the work of the school and boarding has seen a major impact on their life chances. The Covid pandemic had impacted greatly on their independence, and the work of boarding in managing the growing need for independence carefully against the need for friendship continuity (Zoom calls whilst bubbles operated between floors as an example), has seen the boarder grow in many ways. This has led to the boarder accessing work experience, appearing on stage, and developing independent living skills, including the use of IT. This has enabled the family to see the development of skills that were not moving forward in the home, which also illustrates the power and capacity to support families that the Tapestry system is bringing.

In summary the social worker was full of praise for the work of the boarding team and spoke repeatedly about the flexibility of the support on offer.

SCCIF: Outstanding Criteria; The effectiveness of Leaders and Managers

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.

Consultation with Head of Care over

As part of the Standard 20 visit, I reviewed an audit document related to the SCCIF that is designed to inform action planning for the boarding provision. I found the document to be extremely well ordered and containing lots of detail. I suggested the insertion of an evaluative section for each statement in the SCCIF to enable the boarding team to discuss how completely they feel the work they do meets the terminology of each statement in the SCCIF in the light of real evidence and practice that is readily available. This could also highlight any areas that the staff team feel could be improved. It then follows that a possible course of action is to use this to add focus to the creation of a very targeted action plan. I am happy to support this work further at my next Standard 3 visit.

SCCIF: Outstanding Criteria; The Effectiveness of Leaders and Managers

Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.

Thematic Areas : Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards

Standard	Evidence / Observation
<p>Standard 16: Contact with parents/carers</p> <p>Standard 18: Securing Children's views</p> <p><u>(NMS: September 2022 onwards)</u></p>	<p><u>Parent Survey</u></p> <p>During this Standard 20 visit the Head of Care shared with me a partially completed parent survey. This is a part of the planning for future developments at Linden Lodge and has the following focus areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enjoyment of the boarding experience. - Progress and Development being positive. - Contact with boarding being strong. - The organisation of boarding. - The timeliness of response to contact from boarding staff. - The accessibility of the Tapestry system. - The visibility of progress of boarders through Tapestry. - The desire to see important documents shared through Tapestry. - The satisfaction with the range of activities. - Whether parents would recommend Linden Lodge boarding. - The best 3 things. - The 3 things they would improve. - Any other comments. <p>The survey uses a Likert 5 point scale to ask parents to rate their views (strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, strongly disagree). At the time of my visit there were 8 respondents (of 15 boarders) to the survey, and it has been an overwhelmingly positive response. There has not been a single negative response to a question, which is very impressive to read. This clearly illustrates the value attached to the boarding provision, but also the desire to strive for constant improvement. The Head of Care intends to use the survey feedback to feed into developmental planning.</p> <p>From the best 3 things section the positive comments have included: <i>"Friendship with peers, independence, after school events, care, independence in safe environment, ability for pupil to socialise, gain new skills whilst having fun, XXXXX has talked about new independence skills; it has made us raise our game at home e.g. making XXXXX empty the dishwasher, good communication between staff/parents, activities given and staff safety and security around XXXX, big thanks to the staff that makes it possible for XXXXX to keep going, brilliant communication home".</i></p> <p>From the 3 things to improve, suggestions have included: <i>"Technological capabilities, modernisation of décor, sensory suite, more parents' evenings, none, more activities offered, more staff at times, nothing else :), More technology like different game console for the children, update the home with cool air (fans) in hot weather, more social opportunities within the community".</i></p> <p>Overall comments: <i>"Good staff, amazing staff, much appreciated, good staff, just want to say a huge thank you for the hard work and commitment all the staff put in. We are so grateful!! Keep up the good work! Good work , keep it up 🏠, I can say with complete confidence that my child thoroughly enjoys staying at Linden Lodge and it has definitely helped his life skills."</i></p>

Summary of Visit

There is so much to admire about the approach to the boarding provision at Linden Lodge, and I have come away again from this visit impressed by what I have seen. The fashion in which the visits are being seized upon to gather advice on how to improve, what should be made clear in an already highly impressive operation, is commendable. The determination to leave no stone unturned in the reaching for the highest standards in the boarding offer makes it feel a very special place to work and live.

I would like to thank all of the staff and boarders for their extremely warm welcome. I hope that everyone has a really relaxing and peaceful summer break, and I would like to extend my best wishes to the departing Headteacher that leaves a legacy of great quality that can be built upon. I am confident that the succession planning that is taking place will enable the boarding provision to go from strength to strength, and I am happy to be a part of supporting this journey. Best wishes to all.

Name: Mark Goode **Date:** 10.07.22

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT

Actions	Comments from Provider	Date to be completed by
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u></p> <p>To identify a new link governor for the boarding provision and ensure that the requirements of the new National Minimum Standards are highlighted and responded to – especially regarding the new Standard 3.</p> <p><u>National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools</u></p> <p>3.3 <i>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.</i></p> <p>3.4 <i>The headteacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, or proprietor carry out, and record in writing, once each year:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for residential pupils, in relation to:</i> • <i>its Statement of Purpose; its staffing policy; the placement plans for individual children; and</i> • <i>an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards and actions it will undertake to ensure compliance.</i> <p><i>Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school.</i></p>	<p>Currently we are identifying possible candidates regarding a link governor for residential. We very much look forward to having a strong working and supportive relationship once in post.</p> <p>Residential Statement of Purpose will be reviewed and updated accordingly. Following new National Standards 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4</p>	<p>Term 1 2022-3</p>
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u></p> <p>To complete the intended work related to the boarding provision and action planning using the SCCIF.</p> <p><u>SCCIF: Outstanding Criteria; The Effectiveness of Leaders and Managers</u></p> <p><i>Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.</i></p>	<p>The New National Standards and SCCIF will inform an action plan for residential.</p>	<p>Term 1 2022-23</p>

Provider's Comments

Name: Jhenni Izquierdo, Head of Residential Care

A very pleasing report to read also capturing how committed the residential team are to giving the young person the best possible experience.

Date: 18-07-2022

Name: Deborah Rix, Headteacher

Date: