



## Standard 3 Visit

<b>Name of Service</b>	<b>Oak Lodge School</b>
<b>Date of previous visit</b>	<b>13/03/2024</b>
<b>Date of this visit</b>	<b>08/05/2024</b>
<b>Standard 3 Visitor</b>	<b>Mark Goode</b>
<b>Time of visit</b>	<b>14.45</b>
<b>Visit Supported by</b>	<b>Heads of Residential: Connor Byrne/Elizabeth Quinn Headteacher – Caroline Rowlandson</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 (as of 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022).**

**3.1 The Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school appoint a representative who is independent of the leadership and management of the school to visit the residential provision six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. The representative is vetted in line with the school's safe recruitment policy, in accordance with the safer recruitment requirements set out in Keeping children safe in education, and has the skills and authority to effectively carry out this role**

**3.2 Monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:**

- conversations with children, the senior management team and staff;
- conversations with social workers where relevant;
- conversations with parents/carers where relevant;
- checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, bullying, restraint (including restrictive interventions), risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children including in relation to residential provision;
- evaluation of the quality of the provision and effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded;
- Assessment of the suitability and physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the residential provision and the external environment.

**3.3 Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the Headteacher (or school equivalent) and where applicable the Governing Body, trust, or proprietor.**

- Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body) within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. The Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor of the school should record a formal response to each written report.
- Monitoring reports and formal responses should be retained by the school and made available during an inspection and, on request, shared with any placing authorities and with the local authority where the school is located.

**3.4 The Headteacher (or school equivalent), Governing Body, trustees, or proprietor carry out, and record in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for residential pupils, in relation to:**

- its Statement of Purpose;
- its staffing policy;
- the placement plans for individual children; and
- an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards and
- actions it will undertake to ensure compliance.

**There is also an intention to review other thematic areas in discussion with the school:**

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

**During visits opportunities are also taken to:**

- Provide opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet me (in private if they wish).
- Carry out observations of the care provided, or systems being used.

## Introduction and Context for this visit

Oak Lodge is a regional maintained Special Education Needs school in the London Borough of Wandsworth, providing education for pupils aged 10 to 19; who are D/deaf and/or who have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). *(The term D/deaf is used throughout education and research to describe students who are Deaf (British Sign Language users) and deaf (who are hard of hearing and tend to communicate more orally)).*

Many of the pupils have additional needs e.g. ASD, Motor Difficulties, Visual Impairment, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, etc. and require a differentiated curriculum and more intensive support to facilitate their learning. The school aims to support the development of each student's full language and communication potential using a student-centred multi-modal approach to language development which includes BSL, Sign Supported English (SSE), spoken English, written English and the use of visual and kinaesthetic learning strategies. Students benefit from being educated in an inclusive multimodal communication environment with additional intensive pupil support to facilitate their learning when required.

Oak Lodge is centrally located just south of central London near the A205 (South Circular). Rail services are excellent with Balham and Clapham Junction rail station and Clapham South tube stations within walking distance. To date they have pupils from 32 different local authorities and offer weekly residential facilities which have been praised by Ofsted. The residential service aims to provide a safe and nurturing environment which allows young people to develop skills to become independent and develop their D/deaf identity. Residential boarding is offered Monday- Friday for young people who attend Oak Lodge School and have an EHCP and additional support with social development from Wandsworth Borough and across London. Phoenix House offers up to four nights a week, term-time boarding for students aged 11-19 years. Accommodating up to 19 students per night, the unit is staffed by a professional team who specialise in working with young D/deaf people with additional needs.

This report has been completed following the 3<sup>rd</sup> Standard 3 visit undertaken by Platinum Care and took place in the middle of the 5th half term of the year on a Wednesday afternoon. Upon arrival I spent time with the Headteacher as a means to capturing the context of this visit, and then joined the Co-Heads of Residential Care to undertake the mandatory components of a Standard 3 visit. I then spent time with the boarders prior to a number of them attending Deaf Club (which on this occasion was a cookery session on Mexican food that was eagerly anticipated by those attending). I also spent time in discussion with a Senior Residential Staff member. After the visit I contacted a number of parents regarding their experiences of the residential setup at Oak Lodge. These boarders are all set to leave Oak Lodge this summer and my aim was to ascertain onward plans and their feelings over the transition arrangements that are in hand.

During my initial meeting with the Headteacher I was informed that one of the Co-Heads of Care has resigned for mid-June and that there is to be a recruitment process undertaken to fill the post for September. The Headteacher also informed me that there is set to be a fall in numbers for September, and recruitment for one other staff member that is being considered in this process as well.

The Headteacher and I agreed the parameters for this visit (in addition to the mandatory sections that are required); that I would concentrate upon following up on the recommendations I made last term, and undertake a follow up call with one or more of the Governors that support Residential. I also agreed that the next visit I undertake will be on a day other than a Wednesday to enable more time alongside the boarders. We also discussed the process of self-evaluation for the Residential Setup and that it is ongoing between the Co-Head of Residential that is staying on and the Headteacher herself. In discussion it was agreed that I would look to return to this potentially in the Autumn term as things at present are overtly focussed upon stability into the new year, and upon recruitment.

## Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor
<p><b><u>Building developments &amp; Life-skills Programme</u></b></p> <p>For the Residential Leaders to continue in their work to develop both the fabric of the building and the life skills programme in order for me to review progress at my next visit.</p>	<p><b><u>Building Plans</u></b></p> <p>The Co-Heads of Residential explained that a set of improvements are due to be completed across the Summer Holiday. These include extensive repainting of much of the Residential area, new blinds for the IT suite and it is expected that the 'refresh' will be completed before the start of the Autumn term.</p> <p><b><u>Life Skills Programme</u></b></p> <p>The Co-Heads of Residential also explained that the life skills programme is now set up and that baseline assessments are being undertaken. The Staff are engaging well with the programme and a tracking system is in place that enables core life-skills elements to be tracked and monitored over time. The Co-Heads showed me the process and the results of this system and I was impressed with the simple and powerful graphical representation that it leads to.</p> <p>In addition, there has been a frank collegiate debate between the staff that has seen adaptations to the use of the system. The feeling was that empowering the boarders to make choices over the areas to focus upon will see greater levels of buy-in from them, and I agree that this is important, particularly when establishing a new tool such as this. This, along with a very simple to follow ladder graphic, has given clear evidence that the service has really thought the implications of this setup through thoroughly. It seems set to be a powerful piece of work and I look forward to reviewing it in term 6 once again, when it is expected that there will be more to review.</p>
<p><b><u>Updates to Care Plans and Risk Assessments</u></b></p> <p>For the reviews of the associated documents to be available for me to consider a sample in my next visit.</p>	<p>Please see the mandatory section below for details of follow up.</p>
<p><b><u>Safeguarding Record System</u></b></p> <p>To continue to pursue the developments towards transferring over to CPOMS.</p>	<p>The Co-Heads of Residential explained that some introductory training has been undertaken by key members of the staff team in preparation for this being rolled out to staff. This seems likely to be for September and it is anticipated that September Inset training will be likely to see this as a key focus.</p> <p>In the meantime, as showcased in the safeguarding section of the Mandatory areas below, 'My Concern' remains in use and was useful once again in my discussions over safeguarding elements for the residential cohort in this visit.</p>

## How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

During this visit the Co-Heads of Residential and I discussed recent events and concerns for the residential cohort. I was informed that there has been one concern related to an older boarder that is living in supported temporary accommodation out of school, and away from his former family home. The boarder was noted to exhibit some unusual presentation when arriving and this led to a search of his room to safeguard other boarders and contact made with the Social Worker to support the boarder. At the time of the writing of this report the Social Worker has yet to respond, but I was satisfied that the school staff have done all that they can to keep all parties safe, and remain vigilant.

A second boarder was discussed related to online phone activity in the family home at weekends. There are no concerns during residential time, and the communication channels with parents are positive in that support is being given to make sure safe processes are in place for their protection.

The process of transferring systems over to CPOMS is discussed in greater detail in the mandatory section of this report above. I have no concerns about safeguarding systems at Oak Lodge as a result of this visit, in fact quite the opposite in that the discussions I held showcased to me the fact that safety remains the highest priority for staff at all times.

## Mandatory Areas

Topic	Comments
<b>Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes</b> 20.9	During this visit I was informed that since the last Standard 3 visit that took place (08.02.2024) there have been no episodes of boarders going missing from residential and no exclusions from residential.  Attendance figures have been captured since the last Standard 3 visit that took place, and the attendance percentages illustrate an average of 85.2% for residents, although these figures include a resident that has not been able to attend at all owing to broader concerns. When this student is disapplied from the statistics the average attendance rises to 91.758%. There have been 3 days of unauthorised absences in this period for 2 boarders.
<b>Complaints</b> 19.1, 19.2, 19.3	In discussion with the Co-Heads of Residential it was explained that there have been no complaints received since the last Standard 3 visit in March. So much of the detail over the considerations given to the planning for the service is of very high quality and as such it is unlikely that complaints will happen in my experience.
<b>Sanctions</b> 20.6	During this visit, I was again informed that there have been no sanctions used since my last visit in March. The positive atmosphere in the period ahead of the boarders leaving to attend deaf club was a clear representation of the way their interests and wishes are sought. This then leads to positive interactions and relationships, and as such sanctions are simply not needed as boarders feel so valued.
<b>Restraint (including restrictive interventions)</b> 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7	Subsequent to my remarks regarding sanctions, the circumstances that would be needed to see a boarder restrained seem extremely unlikely, given the hard work that goes into the approach to advocacy that is taken by staff. There have been none since my last visit in March.
<b>Risk Assessments</b> Appendix B (11,16)	The Co-Heads of Residential explained that all plans remain relevant. There is a plan to review these once more in June. There have been minor adaptations as needed to reflect any changes in detail for the boarders, and I have agreed to sample a range of these in term 6 after these reviews have taken place in line with the requirements of the NMS.
<b>Placement Plans</b> 7.2	

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

In this visit I once again noted how the space is used to support a homely atmosphere and friendly interactions between boarders, visitors and staff. The fabric of the building remains fit for purpose but the plans for development will enhance them further. The detail related to this is included in the recommendations follow up above.

One notable element of this visit was the fact that, now that the Summer term is upon us, the external spaces and patio area have really come into their own as a resource for pupils. Residents were playing table tennis during this visit, and I was struck by the fact that the outdoor space is very well maintained and has a lovely rural feel to it, in spite of being in a fairly central London location.

### **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-Heads of Residential**

During this visit I spent time alongside the Co-Heads of Residential, scrutinising documents and reviewing the mandatory sections of the Standard 3 requirements, and the main impression I was left with was one of preparedness for the next steps for the service. The imminent departure of one of the Co-Heads is being managed very carefully, with the boarders not aware of this at the time of my visit, although the staff are aware. The departing leader explained how much thought and clarity has been brought to the organisation of the review systems (including the new independence curriculum), and the Headteacher also expressed confidence that the systems that have been put in place have rigour and sustainability.

The remaining Co-Head of Residential and I chatted through the recruitment process that is due to begin soon for the other post, and that the process is designed to see a postholder in place by September. There is a resolve to ensure that the foundations related to systems and processes in residential that are in place are maintained and built upon in the coming weeks and months. The slight reduction in numbers that seems likely, along with the fact that the Co-Heads have worked very closely together, mean that I feel that the service is extremely solid and should be able to thrive still. There are no concerns over staffing capacity as the service moves forward.

#### **Consultation with a Senior Care worker**

During this visit I was able to spend time in conversation with the Senior Residential Worker, who explained that he has been an employee of the school for 5½ years in his current role. Prior to that he worked in a number of social care settings for in the region of 13 years.

He is deaf himself, and all of his roles have been within the support of the deaf community. His roles have ranged across children and adults, but he views his current role as one where he feels most impactful. He really enjoys the variety and the way in which the young people develop so much.

He reflected that upon starting at Oak Lodge, many of the boarders display a sense of worry and anxiety, and are often lacking in key life skills. He enjoys helping them to show the abilities that they have, and he feels he is a good fit for this in the lives of the deaf boarders that he supports as he has experience of this himself and has navigated barriers. This empathy helps him to support the boarders in what they face in society.

When asked if he views himself as a role model, there was a positive response to this, and central to this is the notion that youngsters are aware of the importance of making connections with others. He views himself as a people person who is happiest when connecting others. This was exemplified by an example of a former

boarder that he is seeking to see return to talk to the boarders about their journey towards and into employment.

In meeting this staff member and chatting to him, I was struck by his commitment to the school and to the impact his role has upon the lives of the boarders, whose interests and aspirations lie truly at the heart of his mission within his role. He is an adaptable and inspirational figure that is a key role model with the boarders, and in observing his interactions with them I was left with even greater admiration for his passion for the role.

#### **Time Spent in the Residential Setup alongside Boarders and Staff**

Once again in this visit, there were 11 boarders staying, and I arrived shortly before they were due to leave to attend Deaf Club. The regular boarders were joined by an occasional boarder that attends as a respite placement once a term, and he obviously fits in well.

During the initial phase of the evening I observed a discussion taking place over the evening activity. As stated above, the boarders all have the opportunity to attend Deaf Club every Wednesday. On this occasion the club was focussed upon a session learning how to make Mexican Food. The popularity of this activity had grown from the initial offer, and this meant that more staff than had been planned for would need to accompany the boarders. The club took place near Elephant and Castle and as such meant a need to use the London Underground – a key travel skill based on the location of the school. Not all boarders attended but all that wanted to were able to.

It is very clear that all activities are planned to appeal to the boarders as much as possible and that their interests are targeted, along with enabling progress in life skills. Along with this, the early part of boarding saw welfare checks undertaken on all that were staying and any actions needed took place. I also noted the updated star of the week board and duty lists for the boarders related to rubbish clearing.

I offered the chance to speak to any of the boarders that wished to, and I spent time chatting to two in particular about recent events. One was a young lady who explained that she very much enjoyed residential, particularly enjoys swimming, and was very excited to attend the Mexican food session. The other boarder that I spoke to is an older young man who told me about the Art and Design course that he attends at a local college and that he is keen to become a computer games creator. He has been a resident in boarding for over 5 years and credits it with really helping him in that time.

#### **Consultations with the designated Governor for Residential**

A few days after this visit I was able to speak to the Governor responsible for residential and she explained that she has been a governor since part-way through the pandemic in 2020, and that it was around a year before she was able to attend in person. She reflected that there had been a different Head of Care in post at the time, and that recruiting the current leaders had been something of a challenge but a positive development.

She also reflected that there have been significant improvements in the residential service in recent years, citing improvements in the fabric of the building, the care and emotional support, and we also discussed the growth in the work taking place to support boarders emotionally and in life skills development.

This led to a reflection upon the balance needed between the homeliness that residential represents, and pushing boarders by challenging them to achieve alongside their school work. This is an area that she credits the Co-Heads of Residential with.

In terms of current priorities, we discussed the new life-skills programme, the need to ensure continuity and stability as the Co-Head of Care departs and the recruitment process, as well as the ongoing drive to make the high quality work that the residential service does as overt and visible as possible.

We agreed that the Residential Service is in a good place and that ensuring that this remains the case as the next few months pass is a key part of both our work through our support.

#### **Parent/Carer Consultations.**

Following this Standard 3 visit, I called several parents of boarders that are set to leave the care of Oak Lodge this summer to gauge their views on the ongoing process and support they have been receiving. I was unable to reach one parent, and another was unable to speak owing to work commitments, but I did undertake a consultation with one parent of a boarder that is set to leave in July.

The parent explained that a visit has been undertaken to a college environment in Devon, and this was positively viewed. That having been said, she also went on to tell me that the local authority that funds the placement have been spoken to and funding for this college seems unlikely. She explained that colleges in the London area are also being considered. These may not have the designated support for deaf learners, but are adept at supporting other needs.

It was clear that the family are keen to see contact with members of the deaf community, but that staying in the London area is also a wish. The parent is certainly feeling that time is ticking and would like loose ends tied up soon. I suggested that the discussion with the school (that is underway and saw very recent interaction with a member of the school's staff) is a critical part of the decision making process as their knowledge of the needs of the boarder will enable a supportive process to take place to ensure that the next step really meets their needs.

<b>Thematic Areas</b>	
<b>Standard/SCCIF Reference</b>	<b>Evidence / Observation</b>
	None undertaken at this visit.

<b>Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision</b>
<p>I very much enjoyed this visit and I can confirm that actions are taking place between visits in a very focussed fashion. The imminent departure of one of the Co-Heads is being managed sensibly to ensure that continuity and quality is preserved and I am confident that the correct priorities are in play. The staff team remain an inspiring group of people and the atmosphere in residential was vibrant and friendly.</p> <p>I was also reassured in this visit that Governor support is strong, with a representative that knows and understands the current situation and is focussed upon appropriate current issues for their support and challenge. The parental feedback received in this visit has also illustrated how boarders' transitions to next providers is supported, and that whilst plans are not firm for the prospective leaders as yet, they are being discussed. The care within the residential service remains of a high standard and I would like to thank all staff, pupils and parents that welcomed me graciously again. I am looking forward to my next visit in term 6.</p>
<p><b>Name: Mark Goode</b>                      <b>Date: 13/05/2024</b></p>



RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><b><u>Life Skills Programme</u></b> For the initial audit to be completed and for the programme to see its use lead to the statistical evidence of impact that it is designed to. I will seek to follow this up in my visit in term 6.</p> <p><b><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The overall experiences and progress of children</u></b> Professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children. Professional practice responds positively to children's complex and changing needs. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination</p>		
<p><b><u>Recruitment of new staff</u></b> For the process to recruit staff (including the solution after the departure of the Co-Head of Residential) to be managed in such a fashion as to promote continuity and retain the high standards in place.</p> <p><b><u>SCCIF (Good Criteria): The effectiveness of leaders and managers</u></b> The provision is led effectively and efficiently by suitably trained and experienced leaders and managers.</p>		
<p><b><u>Ongoing support for leavers</u></b> For the support for the imminent leavers to continue and to make sure that leavers' LA's have the relevant information to make informed supportive decisions for the best interest of the leavers.</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>		

Head of Residential's Comments
Another very detailed report from Mark, highlighting what has been working well and what actions to focus on for the next term. We appreciate Marks attention to detail and always learn a lot from his visits

<b>Name: Elizabeth Quinn</b>
<b>Date: 22.05.24</b>

<b>Head Teachers' Comments</b>
The report demonstrates the good work being done by the residential team in continuing to develop their key priorities for the term ahead. A big thank you goes to Conor for his determination and hard work in developing the template for good work across the team. The development of the SCCIF continues to be a priority along with the positive developments with the life skills programme.
<b>Name: Caroline Rowlandson – Head Teacher</b>
<b>Date: 22.05.24</b>

<b>Formal Response from the Governing Body, Trustees, or proprietor of the school</b>
A thorough report highlighting the good work and ongoing priorities of Phoenix House. It was good to speak with Mark last week, to ensure alignment across all stakeholders. As Conor will soon be leaving us, I'd like to formally thank him for his passion, enthusiasm and hard work which have made a positive difference to all in Residential. He's been a pleasure to work with and I wish him every success in his next venture.
<b>Name: Louisa Steensma Williamson</b>
<b>Date: 23 May 2024</b>