



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Oak Lodge School
Date of previous visit	03/10/2024
Date of this visit	Term 2 2024-25 Visit had been intended for 02/12/2024 – but was moved to 07/01/2025 owing to staff absence. This was as close to the planned date as possible and intended to preserve the principle of evenly spreading visits across the school year.
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	15.30
Visit Supported by	Headteacher – Caroline Rowlandson Senior Residential Worker – Saul Allison

About the Independent Visitor

Visiting the residential provision today is Mark Goode. Mark has worked in the Education sector for the past 24 years, leading in multiple schools and alternative providers with experience as both Headteacher and Executive Headteacher. Mark spent time as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors with OFSTED. Mark is experienced in leading bespoke education covering ages 4 to 19 across the full academic range for pupils with wide-ranging complex additional, special and health needs. Mark's strong track-record of inspection processes has helped organisations with low ratings, as well as both 'Good' and 'Outstanding' ratings. Mark undertakes visits on behalf of Platinum Care Consultancy in a number of residential School settings. These include settings designated for care and education of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, learning difficulties, sensory impairment, physical disabilities and health conditions.

Standard 3 Visits

INTRODUCTION: Standard 3 - Monitoring by Independent Visitors (as of 5th September 2022).

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

3.2 Monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

During visits opportunities are also taken to:

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

Introduction and Context for this visit

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 6th Standard 3 visit undertaken by Platinum Care and took place in the first week of the 3rd term of the school year, just after the Christmas break. The original intention had been to attend in the tail end of term 2, but owing to a convergence of circumstances, two attempted visits had to be moved, and the date of this visit was settled upon to ensure the principle of spreading the visits across the year as evenly as possible. As a result, term 3 has seen a visit in the first week, and a subsequent fourth visit for the academic year is scheduled for the last week of this term in February. Upon arrival I spent time with the Headteacher and undertook an in-depth consultation as a result of recent events. At the time of the first visit of the academic year the school was navigating the departure of the second of the Co-Heads of Care that had handed in her notice. As this was taking place there was also the annual OFSTED Inspection of the Residential setup taking place in the final weeks of her tenure. The previous standard 3 visit had seen me undertake a review of a handover preparation that the departing Co-Head of Care had prepared. This was then a feature of the inspection. A key element in this visit was therefore intended to be supportive of the processes now underway to respond to these changes and help the staff maintain focus upon preserving the quality of the residential service as the necessary recruitment and adaptations to staffing are managed. The detail contained in this report evaluates the current situation against all mandatory checks and sets up the next visit that is scheduled for a few weeks' time. This includes reflections upon the outcome and areas for improvement emerging from the OFSTED Inspection, and naturally considers the changing staffing picture as it is evolving.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor in next visit
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u></p> <p>For the recruitment processes that have begun to continue related to the Co-Head of Care post as well as other staff as needed, and for the considerations outlined in the staff consultations to be considered.</p>	<p><u>Update in previous Visit</u></p> <p>Upon arrival I was informed that the advertisement for the Co-Head of Care vacancy remains live but there have been no suitable applicants as yet. The remaining Co-Head has also decided to move on from the post as well. The discussions over the strategy to ensure Residential is suitably led is covered in the consultations section of this report below.</p> <p><u>Update in this visit</u></p> <p>During this visit the Headteacher has updated me as to the current position and this is detailed lower in the report.</p>
<p><u>Life Skills and Impact</u></p> <p>For consideration to be given to how to use the Life Skills system to generate tracking data over time to best illustrate the impact of the Residential Service.</p>	<p><u>Update in previous Visit</u></p> <p>The Co-Head of Care explained that work in this area is ongoing. Recently populated reports were sent home containing this information in the Summer term and new goals have now been picked for this term. The plan next is to bring the Speech & Language and Occupational Therapists into the process and plan/manage this as a collaborative effort. I agreed to reach out to the therapy team in my next visit in term 2.</p> <p><u>Updated in this visit</u></p> <p>Owing to the need to move this visit, the Therapy Team were not present when I attended this time, and as a result I have agreed to pursue follow up related to their involvement in the tracking system for Life Skills in my next visit in February.</p>
<p><u>Monitoring of the quality of provision</u></p> <p>For the various monitoring documents that are in play (SCCIF, NMS Review etc) to be pursued in a timely and sensibly spread fashion as 2024-25 proceeds.</p>	<p><u>Update in previous visit</u></p> <p>Owing to the recent news related to the departure of the Head of Care, there is a process of handover organisation currently in development. These aspects of the oversight of the Residential Operation seem likely to be overseen by the Headteacher in the short term, and I discussed this in my consultation with her in this visit. I will be looking to review the status of this situation in my next visit.</p> <p><u>Update in this visit</u></p> <p>During this visit the Headteacher has updated me as to the current position and this is detailed lower in the report.</p>
<p><u>Handover processes</u></p> <p>For the various suggestions made in this report to be considered, alongside leadership and staffing developments as the Co-Head of Residential leaves. The overarching aim being to ensure that the oversight of the Residential setup is maintained.</p>	<p><u>Update in this visit</u></p> <p>During this visit the Headteacher explained that the very strong handover work that was prepared is in use to maintain standards in the Residential setup in the period that is in place currently. The recruitment of a new Head of Residential is underway and interviews are set. The next phase will see the new appointment using the handover work to underscore the next phase of development. The Headteacher is very much on top of arrangements as discussed in the consultations section lower in this report.</p>
<p><u>Statement of Purpose</u></p>	<p><u>Update in this visit</u></p>

For the suggestions made related to the statement in this report to be considered.	During this visit the Headteacher explained to me that this is now updated (by the outgoing Co-Head of Care) and available on the website. This report contains an evaluation of this against the requirements of the National Minimum Standards below.
Developments related to the Residential Premises For the components that are referenced in this report, and the handover documentation, to be considered and worked upon as the coming weeks pass.	Update in this visit During this visit the Headteacher has updated me as to the current position and this is detailed lower in the report in the consultations section (related to the areas for development from OFSTED).

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

During this Standard 3 visit, the Headteacher and I discussed recent events and concerns for the residential cohort. I was informed that there have been no fresh referrals for safeguarding and the fact that there has been a recent set of circumstances that has necessitated self-referred contact with the LADO. An internal investigation is underway related to procedures, but after a detailed discussion with the Headteacher, it is my view that this is not guaranteed to have met the threshold for formal action. It is however, a mark of the high standards applied to safeguarding at Oak Lodge that the investigation is taking place in spite of no harm of any kind occurring.

I have no current concerns related to safeguarding and agree with the conclusion as stated by Ofsted in the recent inspection that “Children enjoy and value being in residence as a safe and caring place to stay”.

Mandatory Areas	
Topic	Comments
Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 20.9	<p>During this visit I undertook a discussion around attendance and I was informed that no boarders have been excluded or gone missing since my last visit in term 1.</p> <p>The boarding cohort was healthy and full of life during my visit, and the information shared related to the boarding cohort showed that attendance remains strong. Boarders value their time in residential and this makes a significant contribution to attendance generally, and as a result progress in the school.</p>
Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3	<p>In discussion with the Headteacher, it was explained that there have been no complaints received since the last Standard 3 visit in term 1. I observed interactions between staff and boarders of high quality and spoke to 4 boarders at length during this visit. The support on hand for boarders and families remains a key part of the appeal of the residential setup and aligns very well with the OFSTED conclusion that “Staff understand children’s individual needs well including their communication methods and provide consistent routines and nurture that helps the children to feel secure.” As a result of this complaints remain unlikely in my view.</p>
Sanctions 20.6	<p>During this visit, I was again informed that there have been no sanctions used since my last visit in term 1. The time I spent in residential in this visit demonstrated an environment where boarders are happy, respected and free to choose what they do in a supportive and respectful way. As a result, situations that may lead to sanctions are anticipated and prevented.</p>
Restraint (including restrictive interventions) 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7	<p>As inferred above, the topic of restraint was discussed, and it was explained that no circumstances requiring the restraint of a boarder have occurred. This remains very unlikely at Oak Lodge as a result of the nurturing environment that has been created. The care and support I observed in this visit was in line with this.</p>

Health and Safety Checks.	There is commentary related to the evolution of these systems in the consultations section as discussed with the Headteacher.
Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)	<p>During this visit, I explored the current position related to Care Plans and Risk Assessments, and it was explained that a full and detailed update had been undertaken in term 2, prior to Christmas and the departure of the former Co-Head of Residential. This work means that all staff are clear about the needs of all boarders and was reflected in the detail expressed in the OFSTED Inspection : “Staff from both sides of the school communicate exceptionally well with each other and have detailed handovers. Consequently, children receive consistent care by a team who understand their needs”.</p> <p>The current position sees oversight of the plans and updates being undertaken and overseen by the Senior Residential Staff. The discussions I held in this visit made it clear that the Headteacher is instigating a level of Quality Assurance Scrutiny this term, and it was confirmed as to how this will take place when I met with the Senior Residential Staff. I agreed to undertake a check of the updates and quality assurance process when I next return later in this term.</p>
Placement Plans 7.2	

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

In this visit I discussed the use of space and maintenance with the Headteacher in the light of the recent OFSTED Inspection. Aspects of this are contained in my consultation with her. During the visit I moved through the residential space and noted that the boarders were using most areas for activities (computer games, watching TV, cooking, relaxing in the lounge area). All areas are well maintained and accessible. Boarders have free and unencumbered use of all spaces and the premises are clean and well maintained.

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.

Discussions with Headteacher and Senior Residential Staff

The Headteacher and I spoke at length in this visit as book ends to the time I spent with staff and boarders in the Residential Service itself. We covered the following areas:

Ofsted Inspection and next steps

- A key recommendation from OFSTED centres on the recruitment of a new Head of Care, and the Headteacher informed me that there are interviews now set that should see an appointment made by the time of my next visit. This is heartening to hear as the OFSTED Inspection team states that “The leadership and management of the residential provision are undermined by the absence of a permanent head of care. However, the head teacher is highly involved in the day to day running of the residential provision and completes some of the staff supervisions. This provides some stability and continuity to the team.” The Headteacher explained ways in which she is involved in the organisation of the Residential Setup, and the pace of the recruitment process is pleasing. There are two candidates being interviewed (one internal and one external).
- The Headteacher explained that the SCCIF and NMS review documents have been considered with the staff team, and that the evaluation of the SCCIF is in the process of being typed. There are areas that need updating related to the Life Skills programme, concerning the voice of new boarders, and the inclusion of Christmas activities. The fully updated evaluation documents are set to be transferred into a newly updated action plan that will connect to staff appraisals in an efficient and transparent fashion using ‘Blue Wave’ interactive technology. I agreed to consider this at the time of my next visit.
- The Headteacher also updated me related to the fact that supervisions and appraisals are nearing being caught up after the staff changes that have taken place, and that Residential Logs are up to date and being accessed.

- All of the detail above is set to be utilised when a new Head of Care is appointed and dovetailed with the handover documents that were prepared before the departing Co-Head left. It was very clear that the Headteacher is carefully monitoring the standards and making sure that care remains of a high standard.
- The Headteacher also explained that maintenance and premises checks are moving over to a new system that auto triggers alerts. We discussed the fact that this is a useful response to the second area for development in the recent OFSTED report, and I suggest that I will look to review this as it is implemented in the next few months. It was also made clear that the emergency lighting repair has been made as well.

Staff Feedback

- During this visit I spoke to staff in the Residential space and it is clear that there is a degree of relief at the fact that recruitment to the Head of Care post, as well as for a female staff member to work in the setup, has momentum that is openly known about.
- We discussed the way plans and paperwork have been being organised, and it was very clear that oversight is strong, with the Headteacher communicating how quality assurance is set to take place.
- The atmosphere in the Residential space was happy and staff were all working alongside each other and the boarders during my visit. I was enabled to speak to a number of the boarders as detailed below.

Overall, the Residential Staff are happy working at Oak Lodge and determined to see care remain of a high standard as the changes that are coming take place.

Consultations with and observations of Boarders during the visit

- During this visit I met with and spoke to 4 boarders individually about their current status and how they feel about Residential.
- I explored their favourite activities, and forward plans and they all explained the things they enjoy most about boarding. They all have very different interests and get the chance to explore and develop these whilst staying over.
- Key areas of interest expressed were visiting a stable, taking ownership of cookery, shopping and being supported towards potentially becoming a football coach. These were all enthusiastically discussed and it is clear that all boarders have a say in their activities and feel supported.
- During this time the boarders were able to choose for themselves what they were doing and most were happy to talk to me about their current status related to forward plans as well. Most are happy to be staying until they reach 18/19, but as this approaches the boarders that this applies to were clear over what they would like to do next, and are being supported in this.

Boarders are happy in the residential service and are open in expressing the fact that they feel valued, as well as appreciating the experiences that they are accessing.

Review of the Statement of Purpose on the School Website

The Website contains a very easy to access document that outlines the purpose of the Residential Service clearly. This meets the requirements of the National Minimum Standards in the following ways;

- The statement is child-centred and focused on welfare, reflecting current policy and best practice guidance.
- The statement describes the overall purpose of the school clearly.
- The statement explains the ethos and philosophy of the school and provides an outline of the types of provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- The statement includes the overall purpose of and arrangements for the residential provision, as well as how it is organised and laid out.
- The statement sets out how the residential provision complements the life of the school and supports growth towards independence, the staffing structure of the school is laid out with reference to the residential setting.
- I would advocate consideration of a child-friendly version that is referenced as well.

Other Consultations Considered

During this visit I discussed reaching out to social workers or other professionals and parents of the boarders later in the term and I will look to undertake this in my next visit.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision
<p>The main observation that I have of the team based on this recent visit, and the way the staff have navigated the recent changes in leadership, is one of admiration for their resilience and determination to ensure that care remains as strong as it has been before the 2 key leaders left. The OFSTED report that has now been published makes clear the importance of appointing a new Head of Care, and this has been made a key priority, but more than this, the process is underpinned by a resolve to see this done in a way that builds upon the strengths of those that have left, and develops their legacy by augmenting it with simple and efficient new systems. The Headteacher made it very clear that she has a balanced perspective that is ensuring that the next phase is managed well.</p> <p>I am looking forward to seeing how the new appointments take shape, and how they are supported to bring new skills to a well-established organisation. Oak Lodge's Residential setup brings opportunities to a cohort that need and value the high quality support that exists, and I am clearer than ever that all parts of the oversight that I have reviewed are having a positive impact.</p> <p>I will return in February to undertake my next visit and wish everyone well for the next few weeks of important work.</p>

Name: Mark Goode

Date: 15/01/2025

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Review Documents and Systems</u></p> <p>For the following to be available for review as far as possible in my next visit in February:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NMS/SCCIF review and Action Plan (if in place by then). 2. New Maintenance and Health/Safety monitoring system. 3. To discuss the Life Skills programme with the therapy team. 	In progress for next meeting.	<u>Feb 2025</u>

<p>4. To consider external consultations with LA representatives/social workers of any boarders that would feel relevant.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria); The effectiveness of leaders and managers</u> Leaders and managers lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children.</p>		
<p><u>Statement of Purpose</u> To consider the way a 'child friendly' version of the statement of purpose can be created and made available.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Good Criteria); The effectiveness of leaders and managers</u> The statement of principles and practice is kept under review and clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the school.</p>	<p>In progress and statement of purpose updated. 28.01.2025</p>	<p><u>Term 4 2025</u></p>

Head of Residential's Comments
<p>Ben – Following the transition from acting to my permanent role as Senior Residential Lead, I have worked closely with the team to maintain a high standard of care. During the exit transitions of both co-heads of care, I stepped up to ensure continued support and stability. Liz provided an excellent handover, which has been instrumental in the seamless shift.</p> <p>Both the OFSTED inspector's visit and the Independent Visitor's feedback have been valuable in highlighting areas for improvement and recognizing the strong points of our service. Ultimately, our students remain our top priority, and their needs guide all decisions we make.</p> <p>I've taken on the Life Skills programme, revamping it to make it more accessible and user-friendly. The updated structure allows for clearer tracking of each student's progress, with a more effective method of collecting evidence.</p> <p>We've successfully welcomed two new residential students and two respite students who stay one night every fortnight. Both groups have settled in smoothly, further enhancing the diversity of our student body.</p> <p>Saul and I have worked closely to ensure smooth operations in the interim period, developing a strong working relationship to ensure we meet the department's needs. We are fortunate to have such an excellent team, and we are looking forward to collaborating with the incoming Head of Care to finish the academic year on a high note and set everything in place for a successful start to September 2025.</p> <p>Saul – It is pleasing that we have successfully recruited a new female residential worker and she has settled in very well. She has already made great rapport with the students and she is eager to learn new skills working with us.</p> <p>Students are still gaining benefits from our unique Life Skills programme and a few targets have been achieved already in the past couple of weeks. We are awaiting a new notice board so that these achievements can be showcased. Staff are currently working hard to ensure all care plans, risk assessments are updated, and have made a start completing Life Skills progress reports.</p>

While we are awaiting recruitment of our new Head of Care the team continues to work closely with other staff in the school such as Pastoral teachers, therapy team and well-being staff to ensure all students' needs including emotional support are met.
Name: Saul Allison & Ben Cheshire – Senior Residential Leads
Date: 23.01.2025

Head Teachers' Comments
There has been a period of transition since October but this has remained fairly smooth with well embedded routines and structures in place. New students have settled in well and recruitment is ongoing. The team created a positive end of term for our resident students and staff undertook training and teambuilding. Our focus is to secure a Head of Care and review all pertinent documentation. An evaluation and action plan for the skills programme will be undertaken to ensure a through mapping / pathway for all pupils.
Name: Caroline Rowlandson
Date: 23 January 2025

Formal Response from the Governing Body, Trustees, or proprietor of the school
I'd like to commend the team for their resilience and commitment during this time of transition. This report highlights their dedication to maintaining the high standards of Residential care, even through significant change. Caroline's balanced leadership and the thoughtful recruitment process for a new Head of Care reflect the school's determination to build on its strengths and move forward smoothly.
As Link Governor for Phoenix House, I share Mark's optimism and look forward to seeing how new appointments and systems support further growth and excellence. Thank you all for your hard work and dedication!
Name: Louisa Steensma Williamson
Date: 23 January 2025