



Standard 3 Visit

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| Name of Service | Oak Lodge School |
| Date of previous visit | 08/05/2024 |
| Date of this visit | 26/06/2024 |
| Standard 3 Visitor | Mark Goode |
| Time of visit | 14.45 |
| Visit Supported by | Co-Head of Residential: Elizabeth Quinn Headteacher – Caroline Rowlandson |

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.

Upon arrival at this Standard 3 visit I was greeted by one of the Co-Heads of Care and informed that the second had left the preceding Friday. There are details included below related to the impact this has been having and the current position related to recruitment for this post, as well as implications for leadership as things move forward.

This report has been completed following the 4th Standard 3 visit undertaken by Platinum Care and took place in the beginning of the 6th half term of the year on a Monday afternoon. Upon arrival I spent time with the Co-Head of Care to undertake the mandatory checks required of a Standard 3 visit, and to capture the current context of the service and record developments related to the recommendations that I made in my last visit in term 5. This was followed by spending time with the boarders and staff as they were taking part in a Monday evening's boarding.

During this time, I was able to complete consultations with three staff; two of which were residential staff, and one of which was the Deputy Headteacher and SENCO. These consultations reflect the recent changes in leadership and responsibilities, as well as having focus upon staff welfare and morale. We also discussed onward movement for the three leavers from the residential service this summer. The details are included in the consultations section of this report lower down. The conclusion of the visit saw me meet with the Headteacher and reflect upon the recent departure of one of the Co-Heads of Care and discuss the next phase of work for the residential service as we move into 2024-25, and flesh out areas of probable focus for my Standard 3 visits over the next few months.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

| Action Point from Previous Visit | Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor in next visit |
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| <p>Life Skills Programme 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>The Co-Head of Care explained that the initial audit has now been completed and the results incorporated into the most recent reports that have been sent home. The Co-Head of Care also shared a sample of these with me to review as part of the consultations below. There was discussion with the Co-Head of Care and the Headteacher related to how these elements will be being used going forward. This is detailed in the consultations section below.</p> |
| <p>Recruitment of new staff 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>The Co-Head of Care and Headteacher explained that after the recent departure of the other Co-Head of Care that a recruitment process is live. There have been no applicants at the time of this visit but there are contingency plans in place in the event that this takes time. The details of the discussions related to this are captured below in the consultations section.</p> |
| <p>Ongoing support for leavers 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>The Co-Head of Care explained that the three imminent leavers had been targeted at attending the Deaf Academy in Exeter but that plans had recently changed for all to see them instead making applications to local colleges in their communities. The rationales for these decisions are discussed further in the consultations section below.</p> |

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

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| <p>During this Standard 3 visit the Co-Head of Residential explained that the transfer over to using CPOMS is hopefully intended to take effect by September, and I will follow this up in terms of its impact on safeguarding processes when I return next term.</p> <p>During this visit the Co-Head of Residential and I discussed recent events and concerns for the residential cohort. I was informed that there has been some supportive development for the boarder that was discussed during my last visit and that contact with social care is in place. The build up to the summer holiday is important in the context of this boarder, and this is a current focus. This translates into some PSHE work that is planned for all related to understanding of substances. This showcases a high level of responsiveness to needs and a good degree of proactivity for the residential cohort generally.</p> <p>There have been no fresh referrals for safeguarding or LADO support since my last visit in term 5. My opinion remains that boarders' safety remains the highest priority for staff at all times.</p> |
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Mandatory Areas

| Topic | Comments |
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| <p>Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 20.9</p> | <p>During this visit I was informed that since the last Standard 3 visit that took place (08.05.2024) there have been no episodes of boarders going missing from residential and no exclusions from residential.</p> |

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| | Attendance figures have been captured since the last Standard 3 visit that took place, and the attendance percentages illustrate an average of 86.33% for residents, although these figures include a resident that has again not been able to attend at all owing to broader concerns. When this student is disapplied from the statistics the average attendance rises to 92.97%. Two other boarders can be considered outliers as well in that their attendance is significantly lower than others. The attendance with these discounted rises to 98.11%. Clearly the impact of high attendance in residential supports school attendance and general progress. This is a significant feature of the residential service's power to support boarders. |
| Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3 | In discussion with the Co-Head of Residential it was explained that there have been no complaints received since the last Standard 3 visit in May. In this visit I observed interactions between staff and boarders of high quality, and the attention to detail in the paperwork and planning is a key reason for complaints being unlikely. |
| Sanctions 20.6 | During this visit, I was again informed that there have been no sanctions used since my last visit in May. The positive atmosphere in residential during this Monday visit showed me that the boarders are given sufficient space and time to settle in, and that staff are skilled at developing and maintaining positive relationships. As such, situations that may lead to sanctions are anticipated and prevented. The Co-Head of Residential stated that the default approach is to use restorative approaches as sanctions are far less effective. |
| Restraint (including restrictive interventions) 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 May, and the Co-Head of Residential explained that pro-active approach to managing the environment and circumstances is used to prevent the circumstances arising. |
| Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16) | The Co-Head of Residential explained that all plans remain relevant and up to date. These have all been updated during the week of the 10 th June for this cycle, and are nearing the stage where all are signed off by either the Co-Head of Residential or Senior Residential Staff. There have been minimal changes made and the next phase will see these reviewed again after the school holidays and reviewed in conference with parents. I will be undertaking a review of these processes in the new academic year. |
| Placement Plans 7.2 | |

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

In this visit I once again discussed the use of space and how things are kept fresh and suitable for boarding. The Co-Head of Residential explained that there has been a recent order from IKEA for baking equipment as this is a feature of boarding that the residents very much enjoy. This includes recent work to raise money through a bake sale linked to a charity walk, and of course for all birthdays.

The use of the space creates an environment in which the boarders feel comfortable and at home. One notable element of this visit was the fact that the external spaces and patio area were being used by a number of boarders and for walking one of the three PAT dogs that attend regularly.

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.

Discussion with Headteacher

During this Standard 3 visit I spent some time with the Headteacher in the light of the recent developments in the Residential service, most notably the very recent departure of one of the Co-Heads of Residential (the previous week). The Headteacher explained that numbers attending Residential are likely to remain broadly as they are, and that there may be more joining throughout the course of 2024-25.

There is a recruitment process underway for a replacement Co-Head of Residential, but as of yet there have been no applicants. This may see the post not filled into September, but there has been a strong handover undertaken, and the departing Co-Head worked very closely with the remaining post holder as well.

The Headteacher explained that until such a replacement is found that she herself will be supporting the day to day operations as needed, and that there are no concerns about capacity.

We agreed that the support from Standard 3 visits into 2024-25 would be aimed at supporting a smooth transition and ensuring that all systems are operating as well as possible. The Life Skills audit process and the use of statistics to demonstrate the impact of boarding, the ongoing work related to the SCCIF and the required NMS annual audit are all set to be foci in the first terms of next year. I have naturally offered to ensure that Standard 3 visits are available to support these features.

Discussion with the Co-Head of Residential

It was clear to me that the remaining Co-Head of Residential recognises that the departure of her colleague represents a change in workload, but that the stated intention of the Headteacher to support the next phase whilst the recruitment process is undertaken is appreciated. It was also stated that there is an opportunity for several senior staff to take on extra areas of responsibility in this period, and that delegation will be a key part of this period. We then undertook the required mandatory checks, and as this was the first time this had been undertaken solo, I was impressed with the ease that the Co-Head of Residential navigated the various systems and shared key information with me. The handover process has evidently prepared her well and the process was smooth.

The current focus of the Co-Head of Residential is naturally to ensure that staff feel supported as the changes take place, and she also explained that recruitment currently is also taking place for a care worker to ensure numbers stay as high as needed. There are some school staff currently supporting the boarding provision by taking on extra hours, and this (whilst a very good solution) represents the fact that there is space to fill. As this has been a period where leadership has been changed, I then spoke to two residential staff members as a check-in.

The Co-Head of Care also shared samples of the recent reports that have been sent to parents, and these included an overview of the Life Skills audit for each that have recently been undertaken by the staff. This contains details of the nine areas of Life Skills that are being developed as a narrative and a very helpful bar chart that displays each area visually as a % of completion. The report also contains pictures of the boarders undertaking skills related to the tasks where appropriate. This is a very informative and eye catching way to report these skills. We discussed how the fact that statistics are clearly involved in the nine constituent areas and that this naturally lends itself to tracking over time. This could potentially be for cohorts/individuals, but could be used to monitor aspects of life skills individually, identify patterns of development or relative under-

development and use in leadership strategies. We agreed to continue considering this as we move into the next academic year.

Discussion with Staff Members

During this Standard 3 visit I spent time with two members of the staff team discussing recent developments (particularly in light of the departure of one of the Co-Heads of Residential).

The first explained that staff morale had been affected somewhat by recent events and some home issues. The departure of the Co-Head of Residential was one feature as well, but that support for staff was a feature that was in place. Recruitment of the replacement Co-Head of Residential was felt to be important, as well as there being a perceived need to recruit female staff in order to support the balance needed in this regard. The presence of additional staff from the school is appreciated but is not a permanent solution in their eyes.

The second staff member explained that since a former staff member had left, they had taken on a lot of training with the Co-Head of Residential and has taken on the role of key worker for a boarder. This has entailed greater levels of parent contact to facilitate this, and it was explained that as the parents and the staff member are both deaf, this generally takes place through weekly FaceTime calls. The feedback that takes place encompasses residential time and class reflections by teachers that are shared with him. There may be more boarders added to this area of responsibility from September now that the process has taken place with one.

A third staff member that supported this visit was from a very helpful BSL translator that accompanied me around the residential space, translating when I discussed things with the boarders and the staff. She explained that her last 2 assessments are imminent and that this will see her fully qualified. The majority of her work has been undertaken at Oak Lodge and this is set to remain a key part of her working life, although the full qualification opens up greater opportunities for freelance work as well.

Discussion with Deputy Headteacher/SENCO.

During this Standard 3 visit I spent time in discussion related to the onward plans for boarders that are approaching the end of their time at Oak Lodge.

There are three leavers this summer and all were originally destined to attend the Deaf Academy in Exeter, but plans have evolved, and the differing Local Authorities have each decided to pursue local colleges instead. I pursued this discussion and had offered to support through an advocacy letter if attending the Deaf Academy would be the best thing for any, but the Deputy Headteacher explained that in all cases there is support available to access the local colleges and the boarders in question have the ability to navigate this well. One parent was very much on the fence about the Exeter provision in any case owing to the distance.

The applications for the three imminent departures are all in hand and being progressed with the support of the Local Authorities and staff at Oak Lodge. Learning support is being sourced at the same time as a means to meet need. The Deputy Headteacher also outlined that the particular circumstances of the boarders are the key determinant of if they can manage in a local, more mainstream setting, and that if there was greater complexity of need, then this would herald a different approach. There are boarders with greater levels of need coming up through the residential setting and being pro-active means that planning for next year and beyond has already begun for some. This is both reassuring and forward thinking as she also explained that securing placements is becoming harder over time.

Time Spent in the Residential Setup alongside Boarders and Staff

This Standard 3 visit took place on a Monday afternoon and as such it was an evening when the boarding week was just beginning. Boarders unpack and then spend time chatting in a relaxed manner ahead of dinner and then discuss plans for the week. This was taking place during my visit and I was able to chat to most of the boarders as a result.

One boarder was being visited by a REMARK support worker, and they were engaging over table tennis as well as clearly chatting about other features of recent schooling, onward college plans and general support. Several others were chatting and engaging in high spirited but friendly interactions.

The evening then saw some boarders using IT equipment for entertainment, others chatted to me about their aspirations to attend college in the future in courses of their interest, one visited the local shops with their key worker, and another walked a visiting PAT therapy dog that visits regularly.

One boarder then asked if I would like to look at his art portfolio and he explained the narrative behind each piece of work, his inspiration being manga and anime art, as well as graphic novels. I was struck by the consistency of the work, as well as the passion for the skills and subject matter that he has. He went on to explain that he uses his skills in the residential setup and there are examples of drawings of staff members and other boarders that adorn the walls. There is a school summer fete approaching and he is planning to undertake caricatures as part of this. This looks set to be a great feature of the event as the skills he has are rare. He explained that he is keen to develop animations and stories around his key characters in time as well. I thanked him for sharing the portfolio with me and I hope this continues to develop into a potential career path for him. Throughout my time in the residential space during this visit I noted the comfortable nature of the interactions between boarders and staff, and this is clearly a happy and vibrant place to board.

Parent/Carer Consultations and Plans.

Recent visits have seen me call several parents of the current cohort and this visit saw me pursue a focus on staff rather than calling them again. I have agreed that I will look to contact new parents in the new academic year.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision

I once again very much enjoyed this visit and I am happy to state that Oak Lodge's residential provision is a very homely place where boarders are happy and very well cared for. The recent departure of one of the Co-Heads is being managed well and there are plans in place to ensure that quality is preserved and staffing will be more than adequate in the event of a delay in recruiting should it happen, with sensible contingency plans in place. The staff team are a thoughtful group of professionals that have the best interests of the boarders at the core of everything that they do. The addition of the Life Skills components into reporting is a very positive feature.

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 continuing our work together into next year. I wish all staff and boarders a restful Summer Holiday.

Name: Mark Goode **Date: 27/06/2024**

| RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT | | |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Actions | Comments from Provider | Expected Completion Date |
| <p><u>Leadership and Management</u> 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>SCCIF (Good Criteria): The Effectiveness of Leaders and Managers</u> The provision is led effectively and efficiently by suitably trained and experienced leaders and managers. Urgent action is taken to address any vacancy of the head of boarding (or equivalent).</p> | | |
| <p><u>Life Skills and Impact</u> 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>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The Overall Experiences and Progress of Children</u> Research-informed practice, some of which may be innovative, continues to develop from a strong and confident base, making an exceptional difference to children's experiences and progress.</p> | | |
| <p><u>Monitoring of the quality of provision</u> 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>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The Effectiveness of Leaders and Managers</u> Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.</p> | | |

| Head of Residential's Comments |
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| Mark's report is extremely helpful in terms of capturing the work done and supporting us on what to focus on next. We really appreciate the feedback and look forward to his next visit in the new school year. |
| Name: Elizabeth Quinn |
| Date: 16.07.24 |

Head Teachers' Comments

Thank you Mark for your constructive report – we have a clear evaluation of the service and actions to further improve the provision. It is good for you to evidence all the hard work the team have put in to develop the team and pupils.

We are proud of the service offer we provide our young people and the successful transitions for our leavers for the next stage of their journey.

Name: Caroline Rowlandson

Date: 17.06.24

Formal Response from the Governing Body, Trustees, or proprietor of the school

Another positive report for the Residential team – congratulations! Thank you Liz, Caroline and team for your unwavering dedication and support to our students, particularly during a time of transition. This visit highlights the incredible efforts of all staff, and I was especially impressed by the way you've maintained such a high standard of care despite the changes in leadership. As we embark on the new school year, our priorities will be on hiring and ensuring a smooth transition, continuing the development of life skills, and using data to track the impact of our boarding provision. I look forward to seeing ongoing progress in these areas – and thank you for your commitment to ensuring that our students thrive in Phoenix House.

Name: Louisa Steensma Williamson

Date: 8.10.24