



## Standard 3 Visit

<b>Name of Service</b>	<b>Oak Lodge School</b>
<b>Date of previous visit</b>	<b>11/02/2025</b>
<b>Date of this visit</b>	<b>26/03/2025</b>
<b>Standard 3 Visitor</b>	<b>Mark Goode</b>
<b>Time of visit</b>	<b>2.30pm</b>
<b>Visit Supported by</b>	<b>Headteacher – Caroline Rowlandson Acting Head of Care – Saul Alison</b>

<b>About the Independent Visitor</b>
<p>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.</p>

### 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 visit took place in the penultimate week of the 4<sup>th</sup> term of the school year just ahead of the Easter break. The visit saw me undertake an initial consultation with the Headteacher. The recent appointment of the Acting Head of Care, alongside the New Deputy was a focus during this visit. I discussed the recent and coming developments related to boarding oversight, as well as catching up on all mandatory checks that are a requirement of a Standard 3 visit.

The visit also saw me spend time in the boarding house chatting with staff and boarders, then undertaking a telephone consultation with a parent of a boarder in the days that followed the visit.

### Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor in next visit
<p><b><u>Care Plans and Risk Assessments</u></b></p> <p>It is suggested that the Acting Head of Care undertakes a detailed audit of care plans and risk assessments to act as a baseline for any next steps, and to ensure compliance with the NMS requirements to review them at least termly.</p>	<p><b><u>Verification and Update in this visit</u></b></p> <p>I received a document that has been developed for regular reviews to be monitored between the last visit and this one. I have included details of the document and discussion that took place during my visit in the consultations section below.</p>

<p><b><u>Leadership Support</u></b></p> <p>It is suggested that consideration is given to the various ideas for the provision of support to the staff team, and the new Acting Head of Care in particular.</p>	<p><b><u>Verification and Update in this visit</u></b></p> <p>Once again, this was a focus for discussion between myself and the leaders in this visit and is captured in the consultations section below.</p>
<p><b><u>Statement of Purpose</u></b></p> <p>It is suggested that consideration be given to how families' consultation over the Statement of Purpose can be incorporated to fully meet the stated aims of Standard 1 of the NMS.</p>	<p><b><u>Verification and Update in this visit</u></b></p> <p>This was discussed with the leaders in this visit, and the aim of settling the new incarnation of leadership is a current focus until Easter. It was explained that a review of the Statement of Purpose is to take place in term 5, alongside consideration of review documents in the shape of the NMS and SCCIF audits, and any resultant action planning.</p>
<p><b>How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.</b></p>	
<p>During this Standard 3 visit, the Head of Care, Deputy and I discussed recent events and concerns for the residential cohort. I was informed that there have been no fresh referrals for safeguarding concerns made, although ongoing support for one of the boarders is in place after some events of concern in the community. The discussions I held illustrated that the boarder's support from the school (working closely with external bodies as well) is strong and ongoing.</p> <p>A second discussion took place related to concerning behaviours from another boarder and a further event in the community. School staff are in close contact with the parents of the boarder and there is strong liaison to support the boarder in school and at home. My view remains that safeguarding systems are comprehensive at Oak Lodge and I have no concerns after this visit.</p>	

Mandatory Areas	
Topic	Comments
<p><b>Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes</b> 20.9</p>	<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 4. The boarding cohort was healthy and filled with energy during my visit, and the information shared showed that attendance remains strong with an overall attendance figure since my last visit for all school students of 90.1% with Authorised Absence of 7.7%, and Unauthorised Absence of 2.2%. Boarders' attendance has been 94.71% as an average in the same period, with Authorised Absence of 5.14%, and Unauthorised Absence of 0.15%. Boarders clearly enjoy their time in residential and this makes a significant contribution to attendance generally.</p>
<p><b>Complaints</b> 19.1, 19.2, 19.3</p>	<p>The Head of Care explained that there have been no complaints received since the last Standard 3 visit in term 4. I observed interactions between boarders and staff as evening events were planned. It was clear that a mutual respect exists between staff and boarders and I noted warm relationships as the visit took place. This precludes complaints in my view.</p>
<p><b>Sanctions/Consequences</b> 20.6</p>	<p>During this visit, I was informed that there have been discussions held with one boarder who has displayed some behaviours towards other boarders and staff that were not acceptable. This led to a degree of confrontation and some minor damage to crockery. A restorative discussion has been held and the boarder has responded well, apologised and made reparations.</p>

	<p>A second boarder has also displayed some conduct towards other boarders and staff that was considered not to be acceptable. This has led to a calm decision being taken that boarding will terminate for this boarder at the end of this academic year. The consequences discussed in this visit have been calmly managed and have led to the events being moved on from well.</p>
<p><b>Restraint/Safe Hold (including restrictive interventions)</b> 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7</p>	<p>This visit saw the Head of Care explain that one such event has taken place in the boarding house since my last visit in term 3. The records for the safe hold were considered and it was clear that the action taken was appropriate and for the minimum time required to resolve the situation.</p> <p>There has been a targeted debrief and reflection for the boarder and the staff involved in the event, and regarding communication with the family afterwards. This has led to some very positive reflections on how best to manage events and their aftermath in future. The Risk Assessment for this particular boarder has also been updated as a result of this series of events. This remains a very rare event, but I am more than satisfied that the process in place has led to strong records and solid learning.</p>
<p><b>Risk Assessments</b> Appendix B (11,16)</p>	<p>Between visits, the Acting Head of Care had shared an audit of all care plans and risk assessments that has been undertaken since his appointment, and following the last visit that I undertook. This was suggested as a means to support the staff in assuming new roles, and help the new staff structure bed in, creating a solid baseline for the systems in place. It is also a simply created method to track actions over time.</p>
<p><b>Placement Plans</b> 7.2</p>	<p>The audit is comprehensive and clear, and demonstrates that all plans and risk assessments have been checked as having been updated this term. The document also contains details of other termly processes that are in place and a requirement for key workers to complete. These relate to termly reports and parental feedback. The Head of Care explained that a clear deadline is in place for these updates, and I agreed to support this process with a further review of the checking system and a sampling exercise into next term's Standard 3 visit.</p> <p>The document also contained details of a new placement plan devised that is in the process of being implemented to capture all aspects of the intention of boarding and a range of other information. The Head of Care explained that the primary aim of this document is to capture a broad picture of the events and aspirations of boarders that can evolve as their time in boarding passes, leading to a full record of development that can be passed to next providers. The document is well-pitched in my view. The next phase was discussed, and the Head of Care and Deputy are set to create a populated version to share with staff to model their intentions. I fed back the fact that I consider the detail to be strong, especially a section related to onward plans and aspirations for the future.</p> <p>This process was discussed as a means to give some feedback, and I suggested that this can see the expectations that the new leaders have been made clear to staff. I also suggested that the termly audit document for care plan and risk assessment checks would benefit from a section detailing feedback given to staff over these elements of their work as well. It was made clear that the 2 key leaders have taken on oversight of boarders based upon their ages and are looking to bring common expectations to the systems by working closely together.</p>

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

I toured the internal and external spaces used for boarding in this visit, and the new leaders explained their plans for refreshing noticeboards to include Deaf Role Models from the wider world, but also to consider more local figures and potentially former students. They wish to see these used to celebrate diversity, student council work and life skills developments as well. There is a process of devolving aspects of this to the staff team, and I suggested involving pupils as much as possible in the creation of content.

We also discussed ongoing maintenance elements, such as repairs that have been required to the boiler after a recent issue with hot water. There are ongoing discussions taking place related to making sure that all equipment in the kitchen is suitable as well. I agreed to revisit this during my next Standard 3 visit in term 5.

### **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:**

##### **Headteacher**

Upon arrival in the morning I spent some time with the Headteacher discussing recent events, and she explained that the recent appointment of the Acting Head of Care and Deputy has seen the new team settling into the roles. There has been some clear guidance over the role set in place, and both the Acting Head of Care and the Deputy are set to undertake leadership training. The current situation sees the Acting Head of Care operating a dual role at present as recruitment of a female Senior Residential Worker is taking place. This will help with capacity in due course. The Headteacher is herself supporting the processes presently, and there has been supportive governors' involvement.

We discussed monitoring and evaluation processes, and it is clear that the review documents related to the National Minimum Standards, the SCCIF and the Statement of Purpose are to be a focus after the Easter Break. I agreed that supporting the leaders into their new roles was a sensible priority and I suggested I would be happy to review updated documents in the coming terms. The Headteacher also explained that connections are being made to a range of other residential schools to support the development of the service and the leaders.

##### **Acting Head of Care and Deputy**

This was the first Standard 3 visit in which the newly installed leaders have led upon navigating the majority of the Standard 3 elements with me, and we covered all mandatory checks together at this point. The leaders explained that they are looking forward to the leadership courses, although there is a degree of juggling of workload at present. They are working on ways to protect time to be able to do the study work that will be needed related to the leadership training. The recruitment of a new Senior staff member is looked forward to as a result.

Connections with other schools were also discussed, and both new leaders are keen to expand these and learn through this process. The leaders are moving forward in managing the demands of the role and considering how best to manage work, develop the staff team and share responsibilities through development of delegation and quality assurance processes concurrently. It is clear that the new leaders are determined to make their mark and have begun to find their feet. I look forward to supporting them as they take the next steps in this process.

#### **Observations of boarding, and discussions with staff and boarders**

During this visit in the afternoon I spent time with the boarders as the majority were preparing to depart for a cinema trip to nearby Putney. The boarders that were attending were all keen to go, and were assembled in the lounge area. The staff that were leading the trip explained that after a previous trip to the same location had seen the group struggle to get there and organise snacks in time, they were travelling earlier. The journey involves 2 different buses and as such this is a key and fundamental learning activity for the boarders accessing the busy

world of travel in London. The staff were thoroughly prepared and after some organisational matters took place, this group left together with staff. The three boarders that did not go to the cinema then each relaxed and took part in self-guided activities around the residential space and garden as it was a lovely sunny Spring afternoon/evening.

I had the opportunity to speak to one of the older boarders who explained that they are studying Art at college and are looking to cease boarding soon, but stay at the school. The aim for the future is for the boarder to try to become a computer game programmer, and is considering a degree route forward to this end. It was clear that attending Oak Lodge, and being a part of the Residential Setup has supported this boarder well in aiming high. In other recent activities, staff shared some photos of 3 x 100 piece jigsaws that a boarder had completed, and explained the events of the day before when a younger boarder had made and shared a birthday cake with staff and her peers.

A key element of this visit was the sense of belonging to a community that feels like an extended family. I noted the comments of a staff member that has recently moved over from working as a TA in the school to become a full time member of the boarding staff. This staff member explained that the role is something they are very passionate about and are really enjoying. It was clear that their own status in terms of being a role model for the boarders is a key part of this. Their strong working relationship with the boarders was immediately evident in interactions with the boarders, almost that of an older responsible sibling. Relationships underpin the work at Oak Lodge and this was very clearly in evidence in this visit.

#### **Consultation with Parent of a long standing boarder**

In the days that followed this visit I undertook a call to a parent of a boarder that has been attending Oak Lodge for around 6 years, and who is approaching the end of their time at the school. The parent explained that the support at the school has generally been positive, and that the skills learned in the Residential setup connected to life skills, and the liaison between the school and residential in this regard have been especially relevant for the boarder.

The parent also fed back that communication has always been strong and that the Residential team work hard to support this in spite of some obvious challenges. It was commented upon as feeling formal rather than conversational, but there are no concerns about it in any way. An example given cited a change in key worker that was felt to be needed when the boarder did not wish to stay with the assigned one. This was managed well in the view of the parent.

Of late, the parent explained that support has been in place as the school have been involved in the sourcing of a next place at a Deaf Academy in Devon. This is understood to be a regular connection between the school and onward provision, and support has been in place to see visits take place to the new location, and for them to come in and gather information at the school.

The only concern noted is that of the school having to close at short notice a few times when the heating has failed, and the parent understood that these things occasionally happen but would naturally prefer it if they did not.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision		
<p>This was an encouraging visit in relation to the start made by the Interim Head of Care, who has settled into the new leadership structures and is beginning to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the demands of the role from all aspects of the work. The support that was referenced in my last visit has been put in place and the work being implemented has the makings of solid foundations for the next phase of the development of the service.</p> <p>The care on display remains of a very good standard in my view, and I look forward to my return in term 5 and further supporting the new team in shaping the development of the service further.</p>		
<b>Name: Mark Goode</b> <b>Date: 30/03/2025</b>		
RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><b><u>Maintenance of Buildings</u></b> For the Residential Leaders to check the schedule of maintenance is planned to ensure all equipment and facilities remain operational and up to standard.</p> <p><b><u>SCCIF (Good Criteria) The effectiveness of leaders and managers.</u></b> The head of school ensures that the physical environment is maintained to a high standard, is comfortable and meets the needs of the children. Any damage or wear and tear is quickly and regularly repaired.</p>		<b><u>Term 5 2024-5</u></b>
<p><b><u>Termly Paperwork Audit</u></b> For the Residential Leaders to consider and implement the suggestions related to the good start that has been made in creating the termly audit process. This is particularly the case related to the detail that can ensure that the termly checks support staff in the quality of their work reviewing plans and risk assessments.</p> <p><b><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria) The overall experiences and progress of children</u></b> There is significant evidence of change and improvement for children because of the actions of the staff working at the school. The progress of children is exceptional, taking into account their starting points.</p>		<b><u>Term 5 2024-5</u></b>
<p><b><u>SCCIF and NMS Audits</u></b> For these to be completed and shared as they are available in the next 2 visits.</p> <p><b><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria) The effectiveness of leaders and managers.</u></b> Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.</p>		<b><u>Term 6 2024-5</u></b>



#### Head of Residential's Comments

Thank you for this report it is a positive reading and the recommendations have been taken aboard. We are close to the end of Spring term and will make plans to carry out the recommendations at the beginning of next term, including introducing our new Placement Plans to the staff, rolling them out over the term. It is pleasing to receive feedback about the audit for the care plans and risk assessments and I will continue to audit over the next term, including the Positive Behaviour Support plans.

**Name: Saul Allison**

**Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025**

#### Head Teachers' Comments

Again a thorough report indicating successes and areas for action. The report reflects actions and new systems being set up to support the service.

**Name: Caroline Rowlandson**

**Date: 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

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

We'd like to thank Mark for his thorough and insightful report. We're pleased to read about the positive progress noted, particularly the strong start made by Saul as the Interim Head of Care and the effective support structures now in place.

We welcome the feedback on the high standard of care observed, the development of the new leadership team and the positive impact of the care audit and new placement planning processes. We also note the constructive recommendations provided and support the continued focus on leadership development, termly audits and the ongoing review of compliance documents in the coming terms.

We look forward to supporting and monitoring the next phase of development and commend the dedication of the staff team to the wellbeing and progress of the boarders. Thank you all!

**Name: Helen Whitmore & Louisa Steensma Williamson, Co-Link Governors**

**Date: 14 May 2025**