



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Oak Lodge School
Date of previous visit	26/06/2024
Date of this visit	03/10/2024
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 5th Standard 3 visit undertaken by Platinum Care and took place in the middle of the 1st half term of the year on a Thursday. Upon arrival I spent time with the Headteacher, who updated me over recent events related to the Residential setup. This included the notable developments over the imminent departure of the second of the two Co-Heads of Care. The details of these discussions and arrangements being navigated over leadership are included in the consultations section, alongside my conversations and support given to the Co-Head of Care as she plans handover, and details of my meeting with Senior Care Staff as well.

In terms of the boarding cohort and other staffing plans, it was explained to me that there have been two very recent arrivals in boarding in the week that I visited, and there is a boarder undertaking respite stays. There are also plans to see new female staff starting in residential in relation to the fact that there is a profile with more female boarders this year.

I also undertook the mandatory checks required of a Standard 3 visit, and have reviewed documentation related to placement plans and risk assessments, as well as handover planning. In the days that followed the visit I also reached out to a parent of a new boarder and captured their views on the residential support. I then spent time with staff and boarders as they were taking part in the evening's boarding, and spoke to a number of boarders in this time.

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 this 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>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 this 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>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 this 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>

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

During this Standard 3 visit, the Co-Head of Residential and I discussed recent events and concerns for the residential cohort. I was informed that there have been no fresh referrals for safeguarding or LADO support since my last visit in term 6 of last year.

The complement of the Safeguarding team was a topic for discussion, and it was made clear to me that one of the Senior Care staff that are projected to assume more leadership responsibility when the Co-Head of Care leaves is already trained and a member of this group, and that the other Senior Staff member is soon to complete the safeguarding training course that is required.

In discussion of recent events related to internal oversight, the Head of Care explained that a boarder's care for their hair had been noted as a concern since returning from the Summer break. This was an internal concern that was then managed in discussion with the parent, and managed as a life skills development issue. That having been said, the safeguarding components were considered and this reflects a considered approach to contextual safeguarding at the core of decision making. This adds to my general overall view that boarders' safety is the highest priority for staff at Oak Lodge and I have no current concerns related to safeguarding.

Mandatory Areas

Topic	Comments
Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 20.9	<p>Attendance figures have been captured since the last Standard 3 visit that took place, and the attendance percentages illustrate that prior to the Summer holiday attendance sat at an average of 85.89%, with an average of 4.6 authorised absences, with no unauthorised absences. Of the cohort in this period there were 5 boarders of 13 with attendance under 80%. These 5 have had the effect of lowering attendance averages significantly for this period.</p> <p>Since the return to school following the Summer holiday the data illustrates that attendance currently sits at an average of 99.09%, with an average of 0.33 authorised absences, with one unauthorised absence across 15 boarders.</p> <p>The period in the Summer term clearly contains time when leavers will have been attending other provisions as moving on, or not attending school as exams had been a feature of the Summer term. The data since the start of this term illustrates a healthy level of attendance.</p>
Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3	<p>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 the last term of last year. 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. One boarder is currently somewhat unhappy after discussions between staff and parents over details in care planning, and the Key worker in question is supporting this situation.</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 6 of last year. The time I spent in residential in this visit showcased an environment where boarders are happy and respected. 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>In a similar vein to the content above related to sanctions, the topic of restraint was discussed, and the support offered in this visit makes me feel that circumstances requiring the restraint of a boarder are very unlikely. Care and support are responsive to boarders' needs and well judged.</p>
Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)	<p>During this visit, the Co-Head of Residential explained that all plans remain relevant and up to date. They have all been updated since the start of the Autumn term by the Key Worker staff and then are signed off by the Co-Head of Residential.</p>
Placement Plans 7.2	<p>I scrutinised a sample of these plans and risk assessments in the course of this visit, and was impressed with the simplicity and detailed content in both the care plans and risk assessments.</p> <p>The Co-Head of Care explained the rationale for the sign off process, and commented that in her view this needs considering to ensure that language used is always checked once she has left her post. This was then picked up as I left the school for the day as a plenary session with the Headteacher.</p> <p>Ensuring that this is factored into the handover processes is clearly on the mind of the Co-Head of Care and Headteacher. I have made comments that support this process in the consultations section below.</p>

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

In this visit I once again discussed the use of space and maintenance generally with the Co-Head of Care. She explained that there has been a period of absence for the main Site Manager recently, and the main drier that is used in residential has recently stopped working.

There is a set of work that is planned and desired across the residential space and this is all included in the handover documentation that is to be discussed imminently. These include sourcing a new drier, new blinds for the computer room, new coffee table, the removal of some sports equipment, and some noticeboards to be removed. The Co-Head of Care explained that there is a feeling that some aspects of the space could be made homelier. I suggested that reviewing this in the next visit I undertake will be a focus area, but the residential space remains suitable for boarders and generally well maintained in my view.

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 Co-Head of Care

During this visit, following the disclosure that the Co-Head of Care is set to leave her post, I discussed arrangements in place pertaining to the post and ongoing leadership of the Residential Service with both the Headteacher and the Co-Head of Care herself. In addition to this, I spent time alongside the two Senior Care staff that are next in line in the staff structure to gauge their view on developments.

The Headteacher explained that the advert for the post that was vacated at the end of the Summer term remains live and is currently being re-considered for re-issue. It is hoped that this will bear fruit. The challenge of recruitment was discussed in that the school has a particular niche in that the responsibilities of a Head of Care role must be factored alongside the need for translation into and from BSL as well. It was stressed that the search for a permanent Head of Care is to continue, but that contingency plans are in development to see Senior Care staff with added responsibilities allocated, and a detailed handover process being prepared for imminent discussion. The Headteacher and I agreed that I would review any plans and documents alongside the regular processes for my Standard 3 visit and seek to highlight any gaps in processes.

I then spent time alongside the Co-Head of Care and reviewed the planning documents that cover handover to the remaining staff (and in anticipation of any new appointment). The document is comprehensive and I could not add any detail that has not been included, but did give two specific pieces of advice related to it. I suggested that the 'regular tasks' section should be moved to be front and centre, and that a contents list would be a useful addition. Between the end of the visit and the completion of this report the plan has been adapted and the suggestions incorporated. Overall it is a thorough overview of processes and responsibilities that is extremely helpful for the staff that remain. The Co-Head of Care explained that the next stage was to run through things as a senior team with the Headteacher and the Senior Staff to ensure that duties are allocated fully and with the team taking ownership. I agree that this is needed to ensure that there are no areas that are not covered. I also suggested that specifying processes for managing Standard 3 visits could be added.

Following the visit, when I returned to the Headteacher for a plenary session, I fed back that the handover processes seem thorough. I reinforced the fact that the detail was ready for the next stage of conferring with all staff, and we discussed the fashion in which the staff themselves feel about the situation. The Headteacher explained that recruitment will continue, but that staff from the SLT (and other parts of the school staff) will be involved in supporting the remaining staff as the next period is entered into. The exact details of which SLT member (or other staff) will undertake which duties is yet to be finalised, but it is the next step.

Time Spent with Senior Care Staff

As part of this visit I spoke to the two Senior Care staff about the current situation in boarding and I have captured their views below:

The first of these stated that there is a feeling of some pressure at present, but that after being a staff member for a number of years he is ready and willing to support the process of change. He feels that some staff have expressed that they feel reliant on him at times. He was keen to support the process of securing a new Head of Care, and asked if I felt he should express his ideas to the Headteacher. He stated he would be willing to reach out into the community thorough his contacts and had ideas over the advert's content. I encouraged this and it transpired that there is an imminent supervision session due with the Headteacher.

The second staff member that I spoke to stated that he felt the Residential team is strong and very confident in their abilities 'on the floor'. He felt that the show must go on and exuded positivity. He was very much focussed upon the practicalities of ensuring enough time is available for the relevant admin work and other additional responsibilities that are inevitable. He expressed that the meeting on Wednesday of the following week is an important milestone. He is anticipating taking on more and is happy to help, providing that there are enough staff to enable this. There was an overarching feeling of positivity, but also some curiosity over why the Head of Care post has not yet attracted more interest. I reassured him that re-wording the advert was taking place.

Other documents shared in this visit

The Co-Head of Care shared the most recent Statement of Purpose with me and I reviewed it against the definitions in the National Minimum Standards:

- The statement is child-centred and focused on welfare, and certainly reflects current policy and best practice guidance. Whether families have been a part of the process of production is not clear. I would advocate that this is considered.
- 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 and 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.

It may be worth considering the following as a result of this review:

- The wording related to the training of staff towards Level 3 qualifications states that staff will be registered within 6 months. Standard 26.2 states that this time period should be 3 months.
- The process of consulting with families over producing this statement could be undertaken (or made clear if this has happened).
- Make sure it is available on the website as soon as possible.
- Move towards the production of a child-friendly version (if one has not been considered yet).

Leavers Book

During this visit, the Co-Head of Care showed me a recent incarnation of a leavers book that was made and used with boarders that left in the Summer. This is a delightful addition to the processes at Oak Lodge, and contained some heartfelt messages from staff, inspiring images of the Residential provision and team, and spaces for boarders to add in messages of their own. It is a very thoughtful addition to processes that gives all

boarders a keepsake of an important time in their school life. The Co-Head of Care also explained that a Pupil Handbook is in production. It may be that I look to review this in my next visit.

Time Spent in the Residential Setup alongside Boarders and Staff

This Standard 3 visit took place on a Thursday afternoon and saw the boarders preparing for a visit to the park alongside one of the therapy dogs that attend the residential setup. The boarders were relaxed and enjoying the premises. Some were cooking and snacking, others reading or talking. I offered them all the chance to chat and three boarders were happy to do so: The first is a boarder that I have met before. She explained that her favourite current activity at Residential is Deaf Club, to which she is a regular attender. She explained that she has now entered the 6th form, and is very keen to attend the Deaf Academy in Exeter next year. She has visited a number of times already and is very happy to be growing in her independence. She enjoys cookery and is very much enjoying the Residential part of school at present.

I also spoke to two recently arrived new boarders in their first week of boarding. They have arrived in the country recently from Nigeria, and have definitely hit the ground running. Both were able to express their joy at attending a school for Deaf children and are keenly developing their sign language to be able to communicate as effectively as they can. They both explained their favourite lessons at school and came to Oak Lodge from a school for hearing pupils. They are different ages but both explained that they have aspirations to possibly work as a nurse in one case, or in a supermarket. They both explained that they very much enjoy residential and have a very positive mindset about their futures.

Parent/Carer Consultations and Plans.

During this visit I reached out to and contacted a parent of a very recently started boarder. This took place in the days after the visit, and was timed to coincide with the days after the first residential stay.

The parent informed me that it had been a prolonged struggle to access funding for the family to see their daughter attending residential, and that the progress towards accepting this (on her daughter's part) involved a detailed progressive set of social stories and gradual exposure. This had seen a successful overnight stay earlier in the week of the conversation. The parent was very happy with this and explained the impact that this has had for the family after just one overnight stay. The boarder has never before stayed away from home, and is now in their mid-teens, so the importance of this success is a big feature for the boarder and her family, for all of whom this is a large and important respite success. The family have other children that require support in daily life, and the fact that the boarder has been able to demonstrate independence in dressing when in the residential setup has been greatly appreciated. It is viewed as a very good start.

The parent expressed no concerns about the Residential setup, and praised the staff for their approach and overall communication (from overnight staff and the Co-Head of Care).

Call with OFSTED Inspector

During the process of completing this report I received a call from the Inspector that was leading an Inspection of the Residential Setup, and we chatted through my visits and current thinking related to the service. I explained the processes that I undertake related to Standard 3 of the NMS and shared feedback over aspects that the Inspector asked about. I explained a range of aspects of the work, and put across that I view the visits I undertake as a privilege. I also stated that I am most impressed by the way aspiration to succeed underpins the work that takes place at the school and Residential setup.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision
<p>Visiting Oak Lodge is always a highlight of my term, and this visit once again filled me with hope and admiration for the determination of staff to get things right for their cohort. I met a few new faces in this visit and they explained the importance of attending the school, and the impact that residential has been having for them. The news that the service's second Co-Head of Care is set to leave has had a big impact upon the content of this report, but I have been reassured by the fashion that handover is being undertaken in a way that sees staff confident and resolved to manage the transition well. Clearly the recruitment of a new Head of Care is vital, but the steps to manage the situation until then are well prepared and proceeding in as timely a fashion as can be.</p> <p>I wish the departing Co-Head of Care well for the future and am looking forward to supporting the staff that are stepping into new roles and ways of working. The boarders are happy and positive as a result of the strong care within the residential service in my view, and I would like to thank all staff, pupils and parents that welcomed me once again. I will return next term and am pleased to be continuing our work together.</p>

Name: Mark Goode

Date: 10/10/2024

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Handover processes</u> 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>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>The departing HOC has provided the key senior and headteacher a comprehensive handover. There are schedules of actions to be completed and we have a plan of roles and responsibilities for the interim period.</p> <p>The SCIFF will be reviewed as a team.</p> <p>The team are aware of the urgency to recruit a HOC.</p>	Ongoing
<p><u>Statement of Purpose</u> For the suggestions made related to the statement in this report to be considered.</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>To review the Statement of principles and have this as a regular item on the seniors agenda.</p>	Term 2 2024-5
<p><u>Developments related to the Residential Premises</u> For the components that are referenced in this report, and the handover documentation, to be considered and worked upon as the coming weeks pass.</p>	<p>Residential premises to be discussed and planned through Assistant Business Manager.</p>	Term 2 2024-5

<p>SCCIF (Good Criteria) The effectiveness of Leaders and Managers. 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>		
--	--	--

Head of Residential's Comments
<p>As always Marks visit was extremely beneficial. As mentioned throughout the report we also spoke in depth about the process of getting a new Head of Care. He supported with the handover document and gave useful feedback. He also reviewed the Statement of Purpose and was able to identify points that needed to be updated and also suggested getting parental feedback which I will pass on as an action point going forward. I would like to thank Mark for his through reports and ongoing support to the service</p>
<p>Name: Elizabeth Quinn</p>
<p>Date: 14.10.24</p>

Head Teachers' Comments
<p>This was a very constructive and timely visit, with the imminent departure of our HOC / Practice lead. Liz has done an amazing job to get all aspects ready for handover and we will endeavour to continue the good work and systems set up by herself and Conor. We will review the points raised by Mark and action these during the next term. Thank you Liz & Thank you Mark for your ongoing support to improve the service.</p>
<p>Name: Caroline Rowlandson</p>
<p>Date: 22.10.24</p>

Formal Response from the Governing Body, Trustees, or proprietor of the school
<p>I fully support the findings of this report and am reassured by the proactive measures taken to manage the transition in leadership within the residential service. The comprehensive handover process, combined with the confidence expressed by the staff, demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring continuity of care during this period of change. The ongoing recruitment efforts for a new Head of Care remain critical, but it is clear that the interim plans are well-structured and thoughtfully prepared. I echo the admiration for the dedication of the staff and the positive impact this has on the boarders. I will continue to monitor progress closely and provide support as needed in the coming term.</p> <p>Thank you, Liz, for your invaluable contributions over the past two years. Wishing you all the best for the future and Bon Voyage!</p>
<p>Name: Louisa Steensma Williamson, Link Governor for Residential</p>
<p>Date: 15th October 2024</p>