



## Standard 3 Visit

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| <b>Name of Service</b>        | <b>Oak Lodge School</b>  |
| <b>Date of previous visit</b> | <b>26/03/2025</b>  |
| <b>Date of this visit</b>     | <b>14/05/2025</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<br/>Interim Head of Care – Saul Allison</b> |

| <b>About the Independent Visitor</b>  |
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| <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 5<sup>th</sup> term of the school year just ahead of the May Half term break. The visit saw me undertake an initial consultation with the Headteacher, and a second update consultation with the Interim Head of Care, alongside the New Deputy. I discussed the recent events associated with the Residential Service, as well as wider developments in the school. The regular mandatory checks that are a requirement of a Standard 3 visit were all undertaken as well.

The visit also saw me spend time in the boarding house alongside staff and boarders. In the days that followed the visit I also reached out to a selection of parents to ascertain their views on the effectiveness and impact of the boarding provision.

| Areas requiring action from previous visit   |   |
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| Action Point from Previous Visit   | Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor in next visit   |
| <p><b><u>Maintenance of Buildings</u></b><br/>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>Response from the Interim Head of Care</u></b><br/>Thank you for this report, it is 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.</p> <p><b><u>Follow up in this visit</u></b><br/>This is detailed in the consultations section below, particularly in the area that describes follow up on placement plans, risk assessments and the audit processes that exist at Oak Lodge</p> |
| <p><b><u>Termly Paperwork Audit</u></b><br/>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 and NMS Audits</u></b><br/>For these to be completed and shared as they are available in the next 2 visits.</p>   | <p><b><u>Follow Up in this visit</u></b><br/>The Headteacher and I discussed the developments related to the SCCIF and the NMS review processes in our consultation. This is detailed below.</p>  |
| How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.  |   |
| <p>During this Standard 3 visit, the Interim 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 as attendance has been low. The boarder in question has seen longer term community concerns as well, and support has been targeted at ensuring this is in place and ongoing. The age of the boarder and their living situation sees adult social services involved and an established network of support in place. There is a clear dialogue between the school, the boarder, the family and the supportive services involved that sees the school doing all that can be done to support the situation. This includes weekly support from the Interim Head of Care to the boarder as a form of mentoring. Following this discussion, and consideration of the support in place in the school generally, 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><br/>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 5. The information shared showed that attendance remains strong with an overall attendance figure since my last visit for all school students of 90.3% with Authorised Absence of 7.7%, and Unauthorised Absence of 1.9%. Boarders' attendance has been 95% as an average in the same period, with Authorised Absence of 4.8%, and Unauthorised Absence of 0.1%. Boarders continue to enjoy their time in residential and this makes a significant contribution to attendance generally.</p> |

|   |   |
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| <b>Complaints</b><br>19.1, 19.2, 19.3   | The Head of Care explained that there has been one situation that has seen damage to a TV remote from a boarder and a dialogue with parents over this. One of the parents of the boarder in question questioned the sanction applied, but it has not reached the stage of a formal complaint. There has been a resolution to this through email communication and it points to the power of strong family dialogue from the staff. This helps to see complaints as a rare thing at Oak Lodge. This remains my view after this visit.                  |
| <b>Sanctions/Consequences</b><br>20.6   | As noted above, the circumstances around one incident related to minor damage has led to a relatively simple sanction. A second boarder has been managed in a similar way after a period of not following instructions, but once again this has been navigated proportionately. There are no concerns over these consequences as I observed these boarders in interactions with staff during this visit and all was well.   |
| <b>Restraint/Safe Hold (including restrictive interventions)</b> 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7 | This visit saw the Head of Care explain that there have been no incidents of restraint of any kind since my last visit in term 4. The atmosphere in boarding was upbeat and very focussed on activity and fun during my visit.  |
| <b>Risk Assessments</b><br>Appendix B (11,16)   | This visit saw me updated by the leaders of the Residential Service over the way that termly audits of all plans and risk assessments have been being undertaken.   |
| <b>Placement Plans</b><br>7.2   | <p>The discussion and sharing of details has seen it confirmed that the reviews are following the requirements of the National Minimum Standards, and that strong practice is in evidence that sees the staff working to a clear expectation that focusses upon Positive Behaviour Support Plans, Care oversight and Risk Assessments.</p> <p>This deadline is set for the end of June, although ongoing updates are constant if circumstances change, and it is my intention to undertake a full review in the visit that I undertake in term 6.</p> |

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

I toured the internal and external spaces used for boarding in this visit, and the leaders explained imminent purchases. This includes a new washing machine, and the involvement of boarders in raising funds for a new dishwasher. The quiet lounge area has some very informative display boards that are being used to illustrate the work being done to involve boarders through the Residential Council, containing two different versions of the minutes of meetings (supporting inclusion of all boarders), and plans for the coming terms. There is a reciprocal dialogue over the way the boarders' views are being followed up upon that is reassuring to see.

In addition, the display contains 'Proud Clouds' that showcase where boarders have done well in recent weeks and terms. This is a very effective use of the space to celebrate success and leads to prizes at the end of term for the top 3 boarders in terms of unprompted help and kindness, life skills and a range of other elements.

I was also informed that after the half term break there is set to be a review of the rooms in Residential to plan for the Summer Holiday work schedule, and looking ahead towards winter related to the heating and water system. There have been some maintenance issues in the past year, and the team are keen to ensure that pro-active planning is in place to see disruption to boarding avoided wherever possible. This has seen the Interim Head of Care liaising with Senior staff over budget arrangements, and as such this is a development of ownership and leadership skills as echoed in the consultation I undertook with the Residential Leaders.

### **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, I spent some time with the Headteacher discussing recent events as detailed below:

- The view was expressed that the recently appointed leadership team are settling in well, and that supportive management training is helping this process. The Leaders are engaged in NVQ training at a higher level and there are coaching sessions in place to support Leadership development.
- The details of this are seeing formal task setting in place at a manageable level for delegated tasks, with clear timeframes and follow up checks in place. This is a simple yet effective methodology to support leadership growth and is having an effect.
- There have been recent governors' visits that have taken place. It is my intention to seek to review the notes of these in my visit in term 6.
- It was also explained that the recruitment of an experienced female residential support worker is taking place. This will aid capacity and support the leadership growth as described above.

##### **Interim Head of Care and Deputy**

The Interim Head of Care explained that the imminent recruitment of new staff will be helpful, but as he is operating as a Senior and Head of Care he is pacing his work and using the support detailed above from the Headteacher in the way this is being done.

It was confirmed that the Level 5 training for himself and the other qualifications that are being undertaken by Residential Staff are underway, and consideration is being given to how to manage the workload alongside regular shifts and Residential Support work. There is discussion taking place over the use of hours and the budget related to this. The Interim Head of Care also reflected upon the way support is guiding delegation skills and how he is seeking to use technology in this regard to support himself and those being led to stay on top of tasks and timescales.

The Deputy Head of Care explained that managing the staff team on a day to day basis and overseeing new systems and procedures has been ongoing. There has been a revamp of the Life Skills programme alongside the Occupational Therapy team, and the creation of a new template for this work. A new baseline is in development and I agreed to discuss this with the Occupational Therapist involved in my next visit in term 6.

The challenges of moving into leading the team were clearly expressed by both of the Residential Leaders, and they explained that workload balance is a key area for them, but the overall morale that I noted is positive. They are enjoying the added responsibility and embracing the coming period with a sense of purpose. The determination to use support and see skills evolve is encouraging looking forward.

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

##### **Boarding events and time with Boarders**

During this visit in the afternoon I spent time with the boarders as the majority were preparing to depart for a trip out to Finsbury Park and attending Deaf Club and Bowling. Nine of the boarders on site attended this, and there was a well ordered way that this was managed. Staff were communicating between each other and to boarders to ensure all had everything they needed to navigate tube travel and the coming events as independently as possible. This included one boarder deferring a call home until after the trip later in the evening. The support for organisation is a great strength of the Residential Service as supported growth of independence is a key feature of the work to see the boarder operating in the outside world as much as possible.

As the majority of boarders left, I noted that two remained on site. One was being supported by an external youth worker that visits to help them with independence. The visiting worker is also deaf and providing aspirational help for the boarder at a crucial stage in his development. They were engaged in discussion about where to eat, and were set to leave shortly afterwards.

I then spent time alongside the other remaining boarder who explained that he was not on the trip as he wanted to go shopping for a fan for his room as it was hot. It was clear that this boarder very much enjoys his time in Residential and was also wanting to go to shopping to buy vegetables. A key feature of his stays surround meal planning and communication development.

#### Staff Consultation

I had the opportunity to speak to one of the Residential Staff during this visit, and they explained that they have been working at Oak Lodge in the Residential Service for around 4 years. Work beforehand had been in a number of roles, but that the work at Oak Lodge is underpinned by a sense of helping others in their personal growth, and seeing that improvement is the best thing about the role. The development of their own work has seen rapport improve and increase with the boarders over time, and they have learned a lot of strategies to engage.

The staff member also shared the fact that staying at Oak Lodge in the medium to longer term is their aim, and that recently applying for the Senior Role has been undertaken, and they are hopeful of getting an interview as they want to learn more. Their commitment to the role is clear and this is to the benefit of the boarding service as a whole.

#### Consultation with Parent of a relatively young 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 a year. It was explained that attendance at Oak Lodge has generally been as a result of wanting to see the boarder develop greater independence skills. The family live a fair distance away and this makes boarding the best choice for all concerned. It has been going well, and the parent reported that they receive regular updates on progress, activities and skills development. The boarder regularly ventures into the wider community and they feel that needs are very fully met.

The impact that has been seen was stated as that the boarder's sense of independence is growing related to clothes, personal care and use of medication to support health. The staff are considered very helpful and the parent expressed no concerns related to the boarding provision when asked about this.

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

| Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision  |                         |
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| <p>This was a further positive visit to the Residential Setup. It is clear that the Interim Head of Care and Deputy have begun to establish themselves more fully into their roles and have had a very clear focus on maintaining the high standards of care that exist. This is proving to be the case as the care I noted in the visit was strong. They are also accessing good levels of support and development as they bed in.</p> <p>I look forward to my return in term 6 and supporting the new team in shaping the development of the service further. My thanks to all for a warm welcome during this visit.</p> |                         |
| <b>Name: Mark Goode</b>  | <b>Date: 22/05/2025</b> |

| RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT  |  |                              |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| Actions   | Comments from Provider   | Expected Completion Date     |
| <p><b><u>Governors' visit</u></b><br/>For the written report from the recent Governors' visit to be made available in my next visit in term 6.</p> <p><b><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The effectiveness of Leaders and Managers</u></b><br/>Leaders and managers develop and maintain professional relationships between the school and partner agencies that ensure the best possible care, experiences and futures for children.</p>  | <p>Report to be available ASAP, for next visit.<br/>Residential Governors scheduled to visit 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025</p>  | <p><b>Term 6 2024-25</b></p> |
| <p><b><u>Life Skills Programme</u></b><br/>For the Occupational Therapist involved in the review of the Life Skills Template to be available for a consultation in my next visit if possible.</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> | <p>Life Skills templates currently in progress while particular templates are completed i.e. bed making and budgeting and new ones are being created during this term 6.</p> | <p><b>Term 6 2024-25</b></p> |
| <p><b><u>SCCIF and NMS Review Processes</u></b><br/>For the reviewed and updated documents related to these crucial evaluative documents to be available at the point of my next visit in term 6 if possible.</p> <p><b><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The effectiveness of Leaders and Managers</u></b><br/>Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.</p>   | <p>Reviewed on 14<sup>th</sup> May with Head teacher and senior staff together. Will review again July 2025 after action plan impended with the maintenance team</p>         | <p><b>Term 6 2024-25</b></p> |

| Head of Residential's Comments  |
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| <p>Thank you for a positive visit and report. It was lovely to see Mark engaging with the students in Residential before majority of them left to attend the bowling activity at the Deaf club. Mark has continued to be supportive towards our provision while myself are continuing to settle in my role as Acting Head of Care. After his visit I am still motivated to carry out the work required and will look forward to his next visit during Term 6.</p> |
| <p><b>Name: Saul Allison</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025</b></p>  |



| Head Teachers' Comments   |
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| Clear areas of success have been identified and areas for development / in progress. Again thank you for your detailed report. Senior team are aware that we need to reflect on this academic year and create action plans for review and develop NMS / SCIFF action plans. |
| <b>Name: Caroline Rowlandson.</b>   |
| <b>Date: 4<sup>th</sup> June 2025</b>   |

| Formal Response from the Governing Body, Trustees, or proprietor of the school   |
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| Thank you for another helpful and positive report. It's great to see the continued high standard of care and the strong support in place for our boarders. We're really encouraged by the progress of the new residential leadership team and pleased to see how well they're settling into their roles, supported by ongoing training and clear delegation. |
| We welcome the emphasis on building independence and the continued focus on safeguarding, which remain strengths of the provision. The termly audit process is clearly helping to maintain high-quality care and effective risk management.  |
| We look forward to seeing how things continue to develop in Term 6.  |
| <b>Name: Helen Whitmore &amp; Louisa Steensma Williamson</b>   |
| <b>Date: 17 June 2025</b>  |