



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Oak Lodge School
Date of previous visit	24/06/2025
Date of this visit	30/09/2025
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	3.00pm – 5.15pm
Visit Supported by	Deputy Head of Care – Ben Cheshire 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 25 years, leading in multiple schools and alternative providers with experience as both Headteacher and Executive Headteacher. Mark spent time as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors with OFSTED. Mark is experienced in leading bespoke education covering ages 4 to 19 across the full academic range for pupils with wide-ranging complex additional, special and health needs. Mark's strong track-record of inspection processes has helped organisations with low ratings, as well as both 'Good' and 'Outstanding' ratings. Mark undertakes visits on behalf of Platinum Care Consultancy in a number of residential School settings. These include settings designated for care and education of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, learning difficulties, sensory impairment, physical disabilities and health conditions.

Standard 3 Visits

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

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

3.2 Monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

During visits opportunities are also taken to:

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

Introduction and Context for this visit

Oak Lodge is a regional maintained Special Education Needs school in the London Borough of Wandsworth, providing education for pupils aged 10 to 19; who are D/deaf and/or who have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). *(The term D/deaf is used throughout education and research to describe students who are Deaf (British Sign Language users) and deaf (who are hard of hearing and tend to communicate more orally).*

Many of the pupils have additional needs e.g. ASD, Motor Difficulties, Visual Impairment, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, etc. and require a differentiated curriculum and more intensive support to facilitate their learning. The school aims to support the development of each student's full language and communication potential using a student-centred multi-modal approach to language development which includes BSL, Sign Supported English (SSE), spoken English, written English and the use of visual and kinaesthetic learning strategies. Students benefit from being educated in an inclusive multimodal communication environment with additional intensive pupil support to facilitate their learning when required. Oak Lodge is centrally located just south of central London near the A205 (South Circular). Rail services are excellent with Balham and Clapham Junction rail station and Clapham South tube stations within walking distance. To date they have pupils from 32 different local authorities and offer weekly residential facilities which have been praised by Ofsted. The residential service aims to provide a safe and nurturing environment which allows young people to develop skills to become independent and develop their D/deaf identity. Residential boarding is offered Monday-Friday for young people who attend Oak Lodge School and have an EHCP and additional support with social development from Wandsworth Borough and across London. Phoenix House offers up to four nights a week, term-time boarding for students aged 11-19 years. Accommodating up to 19 students per night, the unit is staffed by a professional team who specialise in working with young D/deaf people with additional needs.

This visit took place in the middle of the first half term of the school year on a Tuesday afternoon and, following attending the handover for staff related to the daily details of boarding, involved a consultation with the Deputy Head of Care (as the Head of Care was not available on this occasion). This saw me informed on a range of recent developments, and enabled to follow up on a number of recommendations that had been included in the last report of the 2024-25 academic year. The details for all of these elements are included in the consultations section below. I also completed all aspects of the required mandatory checks for all Standard 3 visits.

Following this I spent time alongside and consulting with boarders and staff, then spoke to the Headteacher as a bookend to the visit. In the days following the visit I reached out to 2 parents of boarders to gauge their views related to their experiences of boarding.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit

Provider's Response and

Verification by Independent Visitor in next visit

Governors' visit

For the written report from the recent Governors' visit to be made available in my next visit in term 6. This has been carried over from the Summer term as a visit was set to take place in the days afterwards.

Update from this visit

The visit from July 2025 was shared with me in this visit, as per my request, and I am happy to confirm it as a very comprehensive and impactful event. The 2 attending governors covered a broad range of important areas related to leadership, staff training, succession planning and forward thinking for the long term, a scrutiny of care plans, an evaluation of the quality of provision, and consideration of external contacts and support. Overall the level of detail and challenge is clear and the support in place for the leaders is evident. This joins up well with the details lower in this report related to self-evaluation and future planning.

<p><u>Life Skills Programme</u> 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. This has been carried over from the last Summer Term visit that I undertook.</p>	<p><u>Update from this visit</u> This visit saw a reflection upon recent developments with the Deputy Head of Care (who is the main driver of the Life Skills Programme). The details are included in the consultations section below.</p>
<p><u>NMS Review</u> For the detail contained in the relevant section above to be considered as the service moves into 2025-26. This can then be a launchpad for further self-evaluation using the SCCIF and support the development of the service moving forward.</p>	<p><u>Response following the last visit.</u> This to be continued after the summer break, especially with the introduction of 4 new starters in Residential. Senior staff will work with Residential team to ensure all are complying with our NMS, as well as a planned thorough review of the SCCIF in preparation for the new academic year. <u>Update from this visit.</u> This visit saw me enabled to scrutinise a range of documents that are being used to support the embedding of the leaders and support the strengthening of the Residential Service as detailed in the consultations section below.</p>
<p><u>Restructure Developments</u> For the imminent process of restructuring to be moved ahead with and for me to receive an update upon attending my next visit in the Autumn term.</p>	<p><u>Response after the last visit</u> Currently in process of finalising advert to promote a new role in Residential, and the successful candidate should start at beginning of Term 1 2025/26. This will allow myself as Head of Care to carry out duties full-time. <u>Update from this visit</u> This has again been captured in the consultations section below.</p>

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

During this visit the Deputy Head of Care explained that there have been no causes for concern that have been referred outside of the school for LADO or Safeguarding support.

There has been one disclosure internally from a boarder that has been referred to the DSL and this is under consideration at present. It is my view that this is a suitable response and I will seek to follow up on this in my next visit into term 2. Following these discussions, 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.

Mandatory Areas

Topic	Comments
<p>Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 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 6 of last year. The information shared showed that attendance remains strong with an overall attendance figure for this academic year so far for boarders at an average of 99%.</p> <p>Boarders continue to enjoy their time in residential and this makes a significant contribution to attendance generally.</p>

Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3	The Deputy Head of Care explained that there have been no situations that have led to complaints since my last visit in term 6 of last year. There have been some instances of contact home regarding behavioural support as boarders have settled into the school year, but all has been managed well through relationships and restorative approaches.
Sanctions/Consequences 20.6	During this visit the Deputy Head of Care explained that there have been some instances where the restorative approaches used have been needed and that these have predominantly related to mobile phone use. The log held details the incidents and how they have been resolved. I have no concerns about the processes and feel that strong bonds between staff and boarders exist that lead to a generally harmonious situation.
Restraint/Safe Hold (including restrictive interventions) 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7	This visit saw the Deputy Head of Care explain that there have been no incidents of restraint of any kind since my last visit in term 6 of last year. The atmosphere in boarding was positive during the visit and all that I spoke to were working together in a productive way. As such, restraints remain a rare event at Oak Lodge.
Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)	This visit saw me updated by the Deputy Head of Care and it is 3 weeks until the self-imposed deadline for care plans and risk assessments to be updated in line with the National Minimum Standards' expectations. Key workers are developing these, and the tracking system that was introduced last academic year remains in place. I will be looking to sample the plans and risk assessments in my next visit in term 2.
Placement Plans 7.2	

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

I once again toured the residential spaces in this visit, and the Deputy Head of Care pointed out a number of features of note that have been upgraded or developed. A significant feature related to an imminently arriving new boarder has seen an office space converted to be a more suitably fitted out room for their needs, and I viewed this in the visit. This is an example of creatively ensuring access for all learners linked to the specific needs that they have.

There are also new sofas in the lounges and a range of new displays that are connected to Diversity and a range of other aspects such as the Residential Council, and the Life Skills programme (this is discussed in the consultations section related to evidence gathering). There have also been a number of new appliances bought in the kitchen (dishwasher and washing machine).

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.

Connection to CSSEF: Prior to this visit the Head of Care shared detail related to a charitable organisation that the school has a connection to. This detailed the fact that shared working is taking place and that the staff at Oak Lodge will be attending a function at the charity. The boarders are set to visit the hub, and the Head of Care is to give a talk at the function. This illustrates the outward facing work that is underway at Oak Lodge.

Handover meeting at the start of the visit

Upon arrival I was present during the start of the Residential Shift and observed the organisational discussion related to the coming evening. This saw the Deputy Head of Care explaining the Head of Care not being available, and then discussion centred on the planned visit to a club in Wandsworth. The choice of whether to go is for the boarders to make and the staff arrangements were made to be able to flex depending on the choices. Others were set to remain at the school, and after a period of relaxation after the school day, would see support for one learner in an academic sense until 7pm, and some details related to medication being sorted out. The meeting was productive and enabled all parties to air any concerns, and clearly connected activities to a life skills focus. The staff then went about greeting the boarders.

Discussions with the Deputy Head of Care Headteacher and then the Headteacher.

During this visit I spent time with the Deputy Head of Care (and later with the Headteacher) and considered recent work undertaken related to the following areas:

Staffing: The leadership of the Residential Setup has been added to with the appointment of a shift lead from within the staff team. This has enabled the Head of Care to be removed from shifts and able to have a more strategic focus, and supported the Deputy Head of Care with the balance between leading and other commitments. This has included a reflection on the fact that he feels better equipped to complete the needed training towards Level 5 (alongside the Head of Care also studying this). The Shift Lead postholder is picking up more tasks and developing confidence, and this is helpful in terms of shift organisation as well.

Boarders: The Deputy Head of Care shared the fact that a number of boarders had moved on to new provisions and that supportive liaison is in place for them. The offer of visiting the school has been taken up by one leaver who felt the need, and whilst the offer of contact for another has seemingly not led to contact, the family liaison officer in the school continues to reach out to another, via adult services as well. The school is a strong supporter of transitions and this is in line with this judgement.

New boarders were discussed and the Deputy Head of Care gave me strong detail related to how they have been settling in. Each has arrived with a different context and the staff are adept at meeting the individual needs through discussion, setting of sensible boundaries and encouraging appropriate relationships between the new boarders and pre-existing ones to mean that all are safe and nurtured. This process is new for some but ongoing. There are set to be 2 more arriving in the near future and liaison is taking place with their funding local authorities and based around their particular circumstances. I will look to review how this proceeds in my next visit.

Life Skills Programme: The Deputy Head of Care is in overall charge of this (a fact that was also made clear when I scrutinised the audit paperwork detailed below), and has been working alongside the school's Occupational Therapist in developing the details. The current position sees the boarders being baselined against a range of skills, and detailed observations templates were shared. These are strong and require the boarders to perform skills x 3 to be evaluated as an embedded skill. There is a tracking process in development that connects to a display board in the main lounge that I was shown. This is attractive in nature and will provide a good visual prompt for all boarders. We also discussed tracking the completion of the targets in a way that maps all boarders. The Headteacher and I discussed that developing a measuring data system to showcase the evidence of progress statistically/graphically is a next priority for this process and I agreed to support this with further scrutiny in the next visit.

Self-Evaluation Documents and Improvement Planning

During the visit the Deputy Head of Care showed me reviews of the National Minimum Standards, the SCCIF and an action plan that has been developed from both. The detail contained in the two evaluation documents illustrates the strong working practice that has been taking place between the Head of Care/Deputy Head of Care and the support in place from the Headteacher. The sections of the two evaluation documents have all been RAG rated against the descriptors, and mapped against evidence that is held. This enables this to be tested when inspected and has led to areas that are evaluated as needing some work to be drawn out into an action plan.

The action plan is strategic and well-considered, and has a very clear focus upon aspects that were considered in need of development at the last Inspection as well. The detail of the work is being quality assured by the Headteacher in a way that is ensuring it has impact, and the process is supporting the growth of the leaders as well. This is a fact that has been picked up in the recent Governors' visit, and adds to the strength of leadership

overall. One area towards the latter part of the plan has detail to be added related to how staff development will be aligned with the overall drive for standards, and I agreed to review how this develops in my next visit.

Time spent in Boarding with Staff and Boarders

During this visit I spent time in the Residential Area alongside staff and the boarders. There was a happy and relaxed atmosphere with boards on display showcasing the work of the Boarders' Council, Skills for Life Activity Programme, Transport Information, Preparation for Learning and an activity board – all of these have been updated since the Summer Break.

Preparations were underway for the trip out to the club, and in this time I spoke with several of the new boarders to say hello and have my role introduced. They greeted me and one was very keen to explain how happy they are in boarding. Others were quieter and simply acknowledged me- I will hopefully be able to spend time with them in my next visit. All were happy and there was a very relaxed atmosphere.

I spoke to one boarder in more depth and they explained recent surgery that has been supported through speech and language therapy from the school. Being in year 11 was discussed, and the fact that they felt that their work in school last year had not been as strong as it could have been was a mature reflection. There is a clear focus on doing well this year, and to then move into the 6th form and get as much as possible out of their time at Oak Lodge. I was extremely impressed with the maturity on display and how proactive and determined the boarder was.

I also spent time talking with the recently appointed shift lead, who reflected upon the challenges of making the transition from a member of the team to leading. The learning taking place is clear, and the shift leader feels that their confidence is growing as they take on more responsibility. They feel they are needing less support, and are enjoying the challenge.

Connection to other services: The Leaders, and the governors report, have shown that there is a process underway where two other Residential Services are being worked with to expand the repertoire of the staff and share practice. This is a positive development and is helping to develop the service and the skills of those working in and leading it.

Review of revised Statement of Purpose

Standard 1.1: A statement of the school's principles and practice to be known as the 'Statement of Purpose' is promoted through the school and made available to parents and carers.

Evaluation: *The statement is easy to locate and accessible to anybody that wants to read it.*

Standard 1.2 : The school prepares a children's version of the statement which is communicated to them using appropriate methods.

Evaluation: *The Headteacher and discussed this and it is under development.*

Standard 1.3 :

- (a) The statement is child-centred and focused on welfare and is produced in consultation with families and reflects current policy and best practice guidance.
- (b) Describes the overall purpose of the school, any theoretical or therapeutic model underpinning the practice of the school,
- (c) The impact of any model on the overall progress and experience of children, which staff are trained in the model and how it is used.

- (d) 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 and how this is organised, including short breaks and flexi or weekly provision.
- (e) The statement sets out how the residential provision complements the life of the school, the staffing structure of the school, how staff are supervised, and a line management organogram.

Evaluation: After reviewing the statement, I am of the view that the principles, philosophy and processes are covered well by the detail included. The aims of the Residential Provision are made clear, and the approaches taken are detailed as well. This means that the requirements of Standard 1.3 are met well by this statement in my view, with one advisory not suggested. This is related to the bullet point (a) above and it is suggested that consideration be given to including how families have been involved in the production of this statement.

Standard 1.4: The statement is published on the school's website and is reviewed annually and updated where required.

Evaluation: This is self-evident, and during this review I accessed the statement through the website easily. It has been updated less than one month ago.

Overall evaluation: The statement is a thorough and comprehensive summary of the Residential Service and I would merely point out the one area for consideration.

Consultations with Parents

In the days that followed this visit I contacted and spoke to the parents of two young persons accessing the residential service. Their views are captured here:

The first boarder has just begun boarding after a period of difficulty at a mainstream school where they had become quite isolated in a separate learning space. The parent explained that the seeking of a suitable specialist placement has been a journey that has taken a number of years.

The parent went on to explain that acceptance of attending Oak Lodge came about after 3 visits, and has been a big change for all concerned, and has been quite a challenge, but that the boarder has begun to settle in. After 3 weeks the results are starting to be seen as new skills such as self-medication and cooking independently have been achieved for the first time. The parent commented that staff support has been pivotal in this, and that the family cannot fault the staff team at Oak Lodge. There has been one minor piece of confusion over returning home but this was managed well.

The parents' hopes are that the boarder is empowered to find happiness, mix with peers of similar needs, develop independence and move forward in ways that they decide. This has all been noted as being supported in a short period of time and the parent reflected that this has been a very good start. The parent even commented that Oak Lodge are helping support them in their own signing to improve communication at home.

The second parent that I spoke to is of a boarder that has been attending for a while and has just under two years left to attend in the 6th form. Feedback was very positive over general happiness and has seen an impact in independence skills at home. The staff are normally responsive related to communication and have been very helpful in securing a freedom pass and giving access to activities. The parent reflected that it would be helpful to have a little more detail in the regular updates, and that they would like to start discussing onward plans quite early and I stated I would feed this back to the school.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision

This visit illustrated that great strides forward are being made by the recently installed leaders in the Residential Team at Oak Lodge, and that extremely strong support is in place from the Headteacher and Governors.

The details shared illustrated the detail in planning that is in place, and the care I observed was of the same high standard that I have come to expect when I attend. I look forward to my return next term and to continuing the support that I feel these visits are bringing to bear. I wish everyone well and look forward to seeing you soon.

Name: Mark Goode **Date: 02/10/2025**

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT

Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Life Skills Programme Evidence</u> It is suggested that consideration be given to linking the very strong checklists to a method of gathering data that can demonstrate evidence of progress for all boarders over time.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): How well children are helped and protected</u> Professional practice results in sustained improvement to the lives of children. Highly effective planning manages and minimises risks inside and outside of the school.</p>		Term 2 2026
<p><u>Action Plan development</u> To enable me to review the progress in the development and use of the action plan in the next visit that I undertake in term 2.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The effectiveness of leaders & managers</u> Leaders and managers create a culture of aspiration and positivity. They have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for.</p>		Term 2 2026
<p><u>Statement of Purpose Review Feedback</u> For the one suggestion made related to the Statement of Purpose to be considered.</p> <p><u>NMS: Standard 1.3:</u> The statement is child-centred and focused on welfare and is produced in consultation with families</p>		Term 2 2026

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Head of Residential's Comments

Another positive reading following the visit on my absence and I was pleased Deputy Head of Care carried out the visit. Restructure of the service with a new role as Residential Shift Lead has already given positive impact during the visit that is pleasing to see, and will continue to develop the staff. Recommendations are noted and will look forward to next visit during Term 2.

Name: Saul Allison

Date: 6th October 2025

Head Teachers' Comments

Name: Caroline Rowlandson

Date:

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

We are very pleased to see such a positive start to the new school year at Phoenix House and to note the continued progress made by Saul, Ben, and the wider residential team.

It is encouraging to read about the smooth introduction of the new Shift Lead role, the calm and welcoming atmosphere for boarders, and the positive experiences shared by students and their families. The focus on developing the Life Skills Programme and embedding self-evaluation through the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) frameworks shows a strong commitment to continuous improvement.

As the year begins, it's wonderful to see the sense of community and care that shines through this report. We look forward to our next visit later in the term.

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

Date: 7 October 2025