



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Oak Lodge School
Date of previous visit	30/09/2025
Date of this visit	20/11/2025
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	15.00 – 17.45
Visit Supported by	Deputy Head of Care – Ben Cheshire Headteacher – Caroline Rowlandson

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

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 second half term of the school year on a Thursday afternoon and, following attending the handover for staff related to the daily details of boarding once again, 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. It also marked the first Standard 3 visit following the recent OFSTED Inspection that has yet to be published. This was a positive experience and was reflected upon in the visit. 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 towards the end of the visit. In the days following the visit I reached out to a parent of a very recently started boarder to gauge their views related to their experiences of boarding so far. Their reflection is captured in the consultations section below.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor in next visit
<p><u>Life Skills Programme Evidence</u></p> <p>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>Update from this visit</u></p> <p>During this visit I spoke to the Deputy Head of Care and subsequently the Headteacher related to this aspect, and it was stated that a re-evaluation process is set to take place concerning the Life Skills Programme. I have commented upon the reasons for this in the text of the report and will look to review how things evolve when I next visit in term 3.</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.	<u>Update from this visit</u> Following the recent OFSTED Inspection, and a positive outcome being achieved, this is currently being considered. The viewpoint expressed is that the recent inspection has confirmed that the direction of travel in planning and processes is suitable and will be built upon with a 3 times yearly review. I agreed to scrutinise the resultant document in my visit in term 3.
<u>Statement of Purpose Review Feedback</u> For the one suggestion made related to the Statement of Purpose to be considered, namely <i>"consideration be given to including how families have been involved in the production of this statement."</i>	<u>Update from this visit.</u> The Deputy Head of Care explained that this has been undertaken with a small selection of families and the results are set to be published on the website imminently. I agreed to follow this up again in the course of my next visit in term 3.
How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.	
<p>During this visit the Deputy Head of Care and the Headteacher explained that there have been no causes for concern that have arisen in the Residential Service that have been referred outside of the school for LADO or Safeguarding support. That having been said, there was also detail shared related to a series of events involving two residents that has been raised and support sought externally. There are investigations ongoing that were explained, and the relevant supporting authorities have been engaged. Parents have all been informed and all actions are suitable given the events in my view.</p> <p>Whilst this set of events did not originate in the Residential Service, the actions taken by the school to involve the relevant authorities are suitable and my view remains that safeguarding systems are comprehensive at Oak Lodge and I have no concerns after this visit.</p>	

Mandatory Areas	
Topic	Comments
Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 20.9	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 1. 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 93.5% (when the most recent arrival has been adjusted for). Boarders continue to enjoy their time in residential and this makes a significant contribution to attendance generally.
Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3	The Deputy Head of Care explained that there have been no situations that have led to formal complaints since my last visit in term 1. There has been one instance of a boarder expressing unhappiness over aspects of support that has a bearing on the safeguarding component listed in this report. I consider this to be being managed very well.
Sanctions/Consequences 20.6	During this visit the Deputy Head of Care explained that there have been minor instances where the restorative approaches used have been needed and that these have again predominantly related to mobile phone use. Processes applied have been very light in nature and I have no concerns about the processes used in any way.
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 1. As I arrived in boarding I noted the aftermath of a disagreement between 2 boarders and the way it was managed indicated the fact that communication is used wherever possible. 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 related to the status of care plans and risk assessments. I scrutinised documentation related to these, and to the very comprehensive review processes that exist for the leaders of the Residential Service to monitor both the updates and the quality therein. Key workers review and update these, and feedback comes from the Head of Care and Deputy through supportive consultative processes. Everything is held in a transparently stored shared area and the results evident in the final documents are impressive.
Placement Plans 7.2	<p>The newest entrant to the boarding cohort's paperwork is being drawn up and completed based upon the EHCP that he came to the school with, and being added to in terms of depth and planning based upon the presentation in the Residential Service since starting.</p> <p>The recent OFSTED Inspection saw feedback given that the documents are easy to read with breakdowns of different areas of detail that is impressive. The process detailed above for the newest boarder has been in place for an extended period and as such this is positive feedback. They also commented that the plans and risk assessments contain everything that is anticipated.</p>

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 continued to be developed since my last visit. There has been a new dishwasher added and the space has ample space for the boarders, whilst remaining comfortable and homely.

There has been a new minibus added that is a welcome addition for trips in Residential time, and training being provided for the staff to be able to use this whenever needed.

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.

Consultation with the Deputy Head of Care

Upon arrival I was greeted by the Deputy Head of Care who I then accompanied into the handover that takes place at the start of the Residential Shift. I observed the organisational discussion related to the coming evening. This saw the Deputy Head of Care and other staff reflecting upon the events of the previous evening as being very draining as a trip was undertaken, and the decision was taken to offer the boarders a relaxed 'chill-out' evening, with any that wanted to visit the shops for provisions enabled, and others to be consulted over the exact details of the evening (games, film or simply relaxing).

This included defined plans for the newest boarder, and some additional staff having been brought in to cover staff that are not available at present. These staff come from the daytime staff and as a result know the boarders well. It was also evident that staff were allocated 'admin' time as part of the shift as well. This is covered in more detail in the discussions with the Deputy Head of Care and the Headteacher below.

The staff then went to set up the evening with the boarders and I continued speaking to the Deputy Head of Care as detailed here:

- We began by discussing the recent Ofsted Inspection and the positive nature of the experience and the (as yet) unpublished report. It was felt that the Inspection recognised the work and organisational elements that have been driving the service since the leaders were appointed.

- One area of development was identified in the inspection related to making sure that all residential staff are supported to complete the qualifications that have been begun. The Deputy Head of Care explained that there is time allocated to all to undertake the work needed within work time. This is a strong sign of the support that OFSTED have cited and is welcomed by the staff.
- We discussed all areas that I had left as recommendations in my last visit as cited above, and I will look to support these further in subsequent visits.
- We also discussed the support in place for the newest boarder, and it was clear that support for his acclimatisation is in process. This is designed to support confidence with others, engagement in activities, and extending boarding towards a full week. This is being done gradually.

Other elements discussed:

- The Head of Care is undertaking collaboration visits to other residential schools to seek out and share good practice, building upon the recent Inspection and the positive outcome. This is, in my opinion, a very positive indicator of a service looking to embrace support and build upon its many strengths.
- There are preparations being made to see a Christmas Fayre take place. There are activities planned in Residential time such as glass jar making and other craft work.
- There is a full activity rota on display in the communal space with bowling, cinema and a trip to Winter Wonderland at a quieter time to support the boarders' needs as best they can be met. Several became a little overwhelmed by crowds in a previous visit and it is clear that this reflects the staff learning and attempting to give the boarders the best chance of a positive experience.

Time Spent with boarders and staff

As I entered the boarding space it was clear that there had been a disagreement between two of the boarders and whilst there was still some tenseness, the staff had been instrumental in calming the situation down, and in making sure that those involved were supported well. The other boarders were clearly aware of the events, and staff were spread out well supporting them too.

Most of the boarders greeted me warmly and said hello, they were also visibly embracing the 'chill-out' vibe that had been discussed in the staff handover meeting at the start of the boarding evening. One boarder was going home early for preparation related to a medical procedure.

Part way through the period of boarding, the newest boarder's family arrived and it was clear that there is a collaborative approach being taken between the staff and the parents to support the boarder in making the transition to full boarding for the whole week. In addition, one of the parents was seeking support in learning BSL sign language to a higher level in order to better communicate with her son. The school staff were clear that the support requested is organised through the school and could be facilitated. I will look to follow this up after Christmas.

Consultation with the Headteacher

At the end of the visit I spent time discussing recent events with the Headteacher and we covered the fact that the Inspection had been a very positive experience, and has given confidence to the leaders as well. It is clear to me that both the Head of Care and the Deputy Head of Care have been growing into their roles and are far more assured. The regularity of Independent Visits, and the manner of supportive challenge is felt to have supported this growth, and I am pleased that this is felt to be the case. We discussed the recommendations from my last visit, and the details agreed are captured in these areas.

Consultations with Parent of most recently started boarder

In the days that followed this visit I reached out to speak to the parent of a boarder that has been with the school and begun boarding very recently.

The parent explained that after attending mainstream primary school, and being allocated a mainstream secondary school place locally, it was felt that the boarder's needs could not be fully met. The distance involved has meant that boarding has been implemented, and the boarder has now been attending for just over 2 weeks.

The parent reported that there had been a great deal of preparation for the process across the summer as the family were aware of the imminent placement, but that in spite of this, the boarder has struggled recently owing to not having been in a school alongside other learners with disabilities before. The parent went on to state that recently there have been signs of interactions increasing with other boarders and staff, but that homesickness is still a feature for the boarder.

The parent fed back that staff communication is good, and that whilst there are some obvious concerns related to the boarder struggling to settle, they are aware of the scale of the change and the targeted areas of independence are felt to be worth the current position and they hope the boarder can settle in soon.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision

This visit illustrated that the school has experienced a very strong OFSTED Inspection outcome recently and that the hard work that all leaders have committed to the service is bearing fruit. In addition, there is a resolve to back up the recent outcome with a renewed appraisal of all systems to make sure that the service continues to be reflective and builds upon the recent events.

The care I observed was pro-active in the time I spent with the staff and boarders, and of the same high standard that I have come to expect when I attend. I look forward to the next phase of development when the reflections that are already taking place after the Inspection will be added into the systems in place.

I wish everyone at Oak Lodge a restful Christmas Break when it comes and look forward to seeing you soon in the New Year.

Name: Mark Goode

Date: 27.11.25

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Call to follow up request over BSL training</u> For the parent that requested BSL support to be prepared for a call from me in the course of a visit in the period after Christmas as a means to gauge their views on support, and the impact of the residential service as a whole.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The overall experiences and progress of children</u> The experience of staying at the school enhances children's life opportunities. For children with the most complex needs, staff are able to evidence the sustained benefit they have had in making a difference to the lives of children in their care.</p>	<p>Deaf parent to be contacted in advance so that support is arranged and provided i.e. BSL interpreter in a timely manner.</p> <p>Stronger relationship with our charity, CSSEF, to enhance this including a visit to their Hub recently and they provided new toys and pool table for Residential.</p>	Term 3 2026
<p><u>Life Skills Programme, Action Plan and Statement of Purpose developments</u> For the Leaders to prepare for updates on these three elements into the new year when I visit.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The effectiveness of leaders and managers</u> Leaders and managers lead by example, innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest quality care for children. They also know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.</p>	<p>These paperwork including Statement of Purpose will be updated including parent feedback/input.</p> <p>Saul and Ben begun and continue work towards Level 5 Leadership & management, and provide these learning into practice.</p>	Term 3 2026

Head of Residential's Comments
<p>Thank you for a thorough and positive report, following our recent OFSTED inspection when previous visits and reports have contributed to the achievement. Our positive working relationship with the Head Teacher and our co-link Governors continues to provide strong input into Residential service for both staff and students, including targets set in our School Improvement Plan (SIP). I will look forward to Mark's next visit at Term 3.</p>
<p>Name: Saul Allison</p>
<p>Date: 02.12.2025</p>

Head Teachers' Comments
<p>This was a good follow up from the Residential Ofsted and how the residential team are being proactive in developing and strengthening good practice. Working with the team to continue to support training, the</p>

review and further development of the life skills programme and how skills are evidenced are current priorities and these were echoed in the IV report.

Name: Caroline Rowlandson

Date: 02.12.25

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

A clear and constructive report, we're pleased to read about the positive progress following the recent Ofsted Inspection. We commend the residential team for their continued high-quality care, strong safeguarding practice and proactive support for both long-standing and newly arrived boarders. We support the planned developments to the Life Skills Programme, Action Plan and Statement of Purpose, as well as the ongoing focus on staff training and parental engagement. We appreciate the commitment and professionalism of the entire residential team and look forward to reviewing further progress at our next visit in the new year.

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

Date: 02.12.25