



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Oak Lodge School
Date of previous visit	20/11/2025
Date of this visit	12/01/2026
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	15.00 – 17.30
Visit Supported by	Head of Care – Saul Allison 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 first week of the third half term of the school year on a Monday afternoon and upon arrival I was greeted by the Headteacher whereupon I undertook a brief consultation related to recent events. This was then followed by a meeting with the Head of Care in which we discussed the events that have followed since the recent OFSTED Inspection visit (this was my first visit with the Head of Care since the Inspection took place and took place following the recent publication of the report).

We also discussed and reviewed all mandatory aspects required of a Standard 3 visit, and I followed this with an extensive period in the Residential Space, during which I spoke to a range of staff and boarders. I have also reviewed documentation shared with me by the Head of Care, and reached out to a parent of a recently started boarder in the days that followed this visit.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor in next visit
<p><u>Call to follow up request over BSL training</u></p> <p>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>Response after the last visit</u></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><u>Verification in this visit</u></p> <p>I followed this request up and undertook a call to the parent in question as part of this visit. The content of the call is detailed in the consultations section below.</p>

<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>Response after the last visit</u> This 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> <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> <p><u>Verification in this visit</u> I discussed all aspects listed above in the course of the visit in my consultation meeting with the Head of Care. The details are contained in the relevant section of this report below.</p>
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How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

During this visit the Head of Care explained that there have been no fresh causes for concern that have arisen in the Residential Service that have been referred outside of the school for LADO or Safeguarding support since my last visit in term 2. We also covered the events following the disclosures made related to two boarders in the course of the last visit as well; The support that has been in place has seen the situation settle and the boarders in question have exhibited respect for the procedures and boundaries that are required, there have been no repeated concerns and a renewed calm was in evidence in the visit related to these boarders. There are no concerns related to safeguarding processes as a result of 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 2. The information shared showed that attendance remains strong with an overall attendance figure since my last visit in term 2 for this academic year so far for boarders at an average of 94%. This includes the impact of one recent arrival who has been on a phased introduction and is now settling in well. Authorised absence sits at 6%, and Unauthorised absence at 1% for the same period. The impact of Residential on attendance is a very positive feature and supports learning very well.</p>
<p>Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3</p>	<p>The Head of Care explained that there have been no situations that have led to formal complaints since my last visit in term 2. There have been ongoing processes used to support boarders in understanding the expectations and standards of behaviour used as needed, and the results have been positive in general. This shone through during the visit when I spoke to several boarders and noted the staff manner in helping the boarders to communicate effectively and in a suitable manner in ways that varied for each boarder. This means that the staff's knowledge of each boarder is used well and the gains in terms of each boarder's understanding helps support the fact that complaints are rare.</p>
<p>Sanctions/Consequences 20.6</p>	<p>During this visit the Head of Care explained that there have been no sanctions required since the last visit I undertook in term 2. Reflection activities and restorative approaches regarding behaviour have been in use at times, with a focus on conduct towards those around you. This was explained as being undertaken in the light of support plans for all boarders that have a focus on positive behaviour strategies and use 'Zones of Regulation' to support boarders' awareness of how best to regulate themselves (examples included</p>

	agreed strategies such as: moving to an agreed safe place, making a cup of tea, walking, having dinner alone). These are very specific for some boarders and have been responded to well in the main.
Restraint/Safe Hold (including restrictive interventions) 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 2. The details above indicate a supportive service that does everything it can to empower boarders to make positive choices. As a result restraints remain a rare event at Oak Lodge and I completely agree with the conclusion of the Ofsted Inspection that stated “When children are in crisis, staff go above and beyond to keep them safe.”
Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)	This visit saw the Head of Care reflect that the previous term had seen all care plans and risk assessments updated fully. The processes in place to achieve this are comprehensive and lead to well-rounded and understood planning of support for boarders. The review process that takes place every term has been begun again and I intend to review a detailed sample of these in my next visit in term 4.
Placement Plans 7.2	The recent OFSTED Inspection stated that “Each child has a risk assessment that provides staff with clear guidance and individualised strategies to manage risks. This ensures that children are supported by staff who understand how to keep them safe. Highly effective planning by the staff minimises risks, both inside and outside of the school. When children are new to the school, any risks are discussed with families and involved professionals to ensure that they are well understood and that appropriate strategies are in place to reduce them”. This aligns very well with the quality that I have noted in many visits, this one being no exception, and is the product of a forensic and consistently applied process of regular review.

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

This visit saw me informed that the school boiler had failed the previous week, but that the Residential Cohort had only experienced one evening of not being able to attend. This is a positive reflection. I toured the Residential Space in the course of this visit, and was impressed with the high quality of decorative order, displays on show, and noted the prominent place occupied by the charity connection’s recent donations of a full size pool table and rocking horse. There are no concerns over the fabric of the buildings and external spaces used for the Residential Service as a result of this visit.

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 Headteacher

The Headteacher informed me that the Head of Care has been made into a substantive and permanent appointment recently. This is a very positive move and reflects well upon the progress made in the service (most obviously reflected in the Ofsted report), but also as a measure of the increased confidence that has been evident.

The Headteacher also explained that a new additional casual staff member has been added to the team, and that one new boarder was due to begin boarding on the day I visited. The support given to the newer boarders was explained and I considered this as I undertook the visit itself (please see below for these details). Staff are doing well on the various level courses that are being worked upon, with one having already completed level 2 and moving onwards. The Headteacher explained recent repairs to the heating system have ensured the Residential Service remains open. The Headteacher also reflected that the Governance related to the Residential Service is strong and very supportive. This was also reflected upon by the Head of Care related to the improvement planning processes that the Head of Care and I also discussed.

Consultation with the Head of Care

As this was the first consultation I have undertaken with the Head of Care since the OFSTED Inspection, we covered the meaning of it and the steps being taken in follow up as we talked. The Head of Care's passion for the role he occupies came through strongly, as well as the way the experience in a previous OFSTED Inspection had inspired him to believe he could do the role fully. The recent Inspection result of Outstanding in all areas has therefore been welcomed as affirmation of the hard work that has taken place having made the difference he hoped for, although he was not generally expecting the result to be as strong as it has been. The feedback received in the Inspection has been well received, and I feel it is truly deserved.

That having been said, the Head of Care is firmly focussed upon the next phase, wanting to ensure standards remain as high as they have been judged in the Inspection, and he explained the way that the areas I made suggestions in the last visit are contributing to this maintenance of quality:

Improvement Plan: The Head of Care explained that, along with the support of Governors and the Headteacher, he has updated the plan and introduced a range of elements and begun working on these in a range of ways. This document was shared with me in the course of the visit and I am happy to confirm that it is a date stamped document that enables progress against all areas to be reviewed regularly. The version shared is date stamped and states this was done after the recent OFSTED Inspection. It retains a clear focus on the maintenance of high quality against the National Minimum Standards, and then has a clear first stated focus on the meeting of the recommendation left after the inspection outcome was published, namely the processes to support staff training developments – which are very robust in my view.

Further to this, the Improvement Plan has a very clear and concise structure that makes plain the intention to use clear evidence as a basis for judgements and covers the following areas using sensible support structures:

- Maintenance of Outstanding Status from OFSTED
- Improve further the Accommodation and Health and Safety standards (NMS) in Residential
- Continue to develop the Life Skills Program
- Conduct a comparative analysis of Phoenix House against other residential provisions
- Restructure development for the staff in Residential, with offering Career progression

There are clearly stated success criteria, identified staff with clear responsibilities and strong school leadership and governor support in place. I am very pleased that the content has been so well-considered and transparently organised.

Staff Development: The recent inspection stated one area of development related to Staff Qualifications, and the Head of Care explained that this has received attention in a number of ways. A number of staff are doing well in the pursuance of professional qualifications (with one having already completed one level). There are also plans for staff to undertake training related to other areas (ADHD Awareness, Food Safety at Level 2). We discussed the value of gathering evidence of this work ahead of the return inspection and the Head of Care explained that the 'blue wave' system is in hand. He is receiving support in this area from the Headteacher and I am pleased that this way of presenting evidence is a priority as the next phase of the work takes place.

Life Skills Programme: The Head of Care explained that this is being revamped and that the new year has been cited as a fresh start. Staff meetings have taken place and the targets are being considered as 'I cans' in a way to refresh the way the language around these areas is used. Each boarder is set to have two simple targets at a time, and there is to be a clear connection to the rewards system. The Head of Care shared the first incarnation of a self-evaluation document related to the programme. It is intended to be used to support the development,

in line with the clarity of expectation commented upon in the overall service improvement plan above. It has a similar structure and impressive clarity to it. We agreed that I would look to review the progress made with the system in the course of my next visit in term 4 prior to the Easter Holiday.

Other areas of discussion

- Statement of Purpose: This is a feature that the Head of Care is reviewing again, and I agreed to support this process in my next visit in term 4.
- CSSEF Connection: The Head of Care gave me greater detail related to the connection to the charity body. Not only have they received resources (e.g. Pool Table and Rocking Horse) that are greatly enjoyed by the boarders, they also attended a fundraiser and are receiving funding that is being used to support the Life Skills programme (resourcing and rewards – events, hot chocolate or trips out etc.)
- Support in induction of new boarders: The Head of Care explained (and later showed me) the process and space being used to support new boarders into full engagement in the boarding process. This is set to begin for one particular boarder imminently with a gradual exposure to boarding in a quiet allocated space, and I will look to see how this process unfolds into term 4.

Time Spent in the Residential Space alongside Staff and boarders

This visit saw the boarders enjoying a relaxing evening. This is often the case on a Monday as the staff explained that the travel in from home, followed by a day of school, can be draining. Many of the boarders travel significant distances and as such this is a helpful feature of the week that helps to settle the boarders in well.

Staff

I discussed recent events with a number of the staff in the Residential Service as I spent time there and there is a generally positive atmosphere following the recent OFSTED Inspection outcome. They are pleased that their efforts have been recognised. That having been said, the staff are also very motivated to keep standards high, and stated that they have been able to continue their different levels of study alongside their work, and that progress has been good in this regard.

I met two supporting staff members that I have not spent time with before; one Remark Officer that was in the Residential Space supporting a young man in an arrangement that supports Deaf Adults and acts as a form of mentor for individuals. This is a strong additional layer of support that I observed and noted as being very useful. I also spoke to a teaching assistant from the school that undertakes casual work as needed in the Residential Service. She explained her role and that she knows all of the boarders from their classes. This clearly helps with familiarity and relationships were clearly well-established from the interactions I observed. One boarder was explaining cultural differences between the UK and her source country and the level of communication required was both complex, and subtly nuanced. The level of debate on show was very mature in its detail and the mutual respect, balanced with fun and a sense of humour, between the staff and the boarder was clear.

The staff explained that the relaxed start to the boarding week was seeing an evening of relaxation and self-directed choices, although there was set to be a gathering of boarders' wishes over the evening and in a meeting to set up the activities for the week. This included a healthy recipe cookery activity on Tuesday, a visit to 'Deaf Club' on Wednesday, and a second trip out on Thursday. As I was there, the Menu for the week was posted to great excitement as well.

Boarders

The time spent with the boarders saw me note the following elements, whilst the Monday evening 'chill' activities were unfolding:

- The gathering of opinion on activities was underway, with staff using a range of means to get this information from each boarder, using preferred communication means where needed.
- I spoke to two slightly older teenage boys about their time in boarding. They are clearly close friends and were supported well in this exchange and in having fun together without crossing boundaries between banter and boisterousness. They were extremely pleasant to chat with.
- Two other boarders were engaged in a colouring activity. They both spoke to me about their enjoyment of their time together in boarding and some of the challenges in this, this had a focus on relationships with other boarders and with staff. One was very forthright in expressing opinions and it is clear that the way the staff are supporting this boarder is seeing development in the understanding of how best to manage personal interactions. There is a way to go, but the support in place is very strong in my view.
- The staff showed me a space in a quiet lounge that is used as a means to help new boarders (and any that need space) to gain gradual exposure and shared space as they settle in. This was a calm and protected space, but the use of it is subtly planned for and impactful as a result.
- I then spoke to a relatively recently arrived boarder that was transitioning toward fuller involvement in the period of my last visit. At that time the boarder was staying 3 evenings per week, and has now moved on to 4 at times. They enquired about my role and I explained this to them. There was also a lovely moment when their new 'Freedom Pass' was given to them. This was explained and there was a clear enjoyment that this had come through. The boarder has very obviously improved in confidence recently and when we chatted, they supported me in creating a sign name for myself based on my interests.

This period of time in the boarding space was, on the surface, not entirely directed towards a set activity, but from spending time together the boarders settled in and are permitted to decompress after a day with a long journey and heading straight into classes. This is a key feature of the boarding week and it was very positive to have time to truly see this in action.

Consultation with Parent of a 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 this year. The boarder has now been attending the school for some 4 months, and whilst there are remaining issues with settling in, the boarder is doing well (once the journey in has been completed).

A key reason for the placement at Oak Lodge School was stated as being to recover lost time as the boarder had been out of school for a year in mainstream having experienced a range of issues. The parent had been seeking a specialist placement for a long time and the opportunity to attend Oak Lodge is something that has then been seen as important in terms of the residential service for helping with communication (signing), being connected to the deaf community rather than isolated, help with personal care and hygiene, and to have prospects for the future.

The parent relayed the fact that the boarder is now thriving. She stated that once in school, that confidence has risen, signing skills have developed greatly, and there is strong collaboration between the family and the staff to support engagement and extending towards full week attendance.

The parent explained that there has been a request made to gain support themselves for signing, and I replied that I knew this was on the mind of the Head of Care to initiate contact and support this development. The parent also explained that there are times when responses to contact could be quicker, but that there is an understanding that it is a very busy environment, and generally the support from staff cannot be faulted. The boarder has regular contact home and has only reported positive elements to do with friendships and the support given by all staff.

The parent closed by stating that joining Oak Lodge has been the 'best thing I have ever done' for the boarder and explaining that the family have recommended Oak Lodge very strongly to another family of a deaf child as they feel you will see 'change within weeks'.

This is a very powerful statement of advocacy for the power of boarding at Oak Lodge, it has clearly been a life-changing element in the lives of the family and the parent could not find any fault at all with the provision.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision	
<p>This visit came quite soon after my most recent one in term 2, yet was a very positive experience as I was able to speak to the Head of Care and spend a great deal of time with the staff and boarders in a way that helped me to see how the service has responded to the recent OFSTED, and has resolved very clearly to use it as a launchpad towards a renewed vision, and embedding the highest of standards still further.</p> <p>The care noted was extremely personal and subtle, yet has a power that is rooted in really understanding the communication methods at play for each, and in building trust with all parties. This was reflected in a number of ways by boarders and also in the extremely positive parental feedback that I was able to gather.</p> <p>I was very impressed with the way the service is looking forward and accepting guidance straight after such a strong outcome. The paperwork I have reviewed, allied to the determination to remain focussed assures me that the next phase of work being undertaken is in safe hands. I thank everyone for their continued warm welcome and I look forward to continuing our work together as the year progresses.</p>	
Name: Mark Goode	Date: 14.01.26

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Service Improvement Plan and Life Skills Programme.</u> For the Head of Care to update me on developments related to the targeted improvement processes, with a particular focus upon the Life Skills Programme, when I next visit ahead of the Easter break in term 4.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The Overall Experiences and Progress of Children</u></p> <p>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>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>At beginning of this term, revamped Life Skills Programme have been introduced to both the team and gradually to the students.</p> <p>Continuous working relationship with school's well-being team and students' pastoral teachers. OT visits Residential one evening a week.</p>	Term 3 2026

Head of Residential's Comments
<p>This is pleasing to read, since it is our first face-to-face visit from Mark since the OFSTED inspection. Since the inspection there has been gentle changes to the service all to meet the increasing demands including support for new students and a revamped Life Skills programme. Mark's comments about the Improvement Plan is greatly welcomed and reflects these changes planned to maintain our 'Outstanding' status.</p>
<p>Name: Saul Allison</p>
<p>Date: 15th January 2026</p>

Head Teachers' Comments
<p>A constructive report with clear action points to develop, in particular the Life Skills programme. The residential team have developed some clear strengths over the past term.</p>
<p>Name: Caroline Rowlandson</p>
<p>Date: 15th January 2026</p>

Formal Response from the Governing Body, Trustees, or proprietor of the school
<p>As Link Governors, we thank Mark for this clear and constructive report. We welcome the focus on strengthening consistency, staff development and the continued embedding of the Life Skills Programme. We will continue to support and appropriately challenge leaders as these recommendations are taken forward,</p>

ensuring positive experiences and outcomes for all residents. Well done to Saul and his team for another excellent report.

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

Date: 20 January 2026