



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Linden Lodge School
Date of previous visit	27/06/2023
Date of this visit	20/09/2023
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	13.45
Visit Supported by	Danny Sinclair – Head of Residential Sarah Norris – Co-Head of School for Residential

About the Independent Visitor

Visiting the residential provision today is Mark Goode. Mark has worked in the Education sector for the past 24 years, leading in multiple schools and alternative providers with experience as both Headteacher and Executive Headteacher. Mark spent time as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors with OFSTED. Mark is experienced in leading bespoke education covering ages 4 to 19 across the full academic range for pupils with wide-ranging complex additional, special and health needs. Mark's strong track-record of inspection processes has helped organisations with low ratings, as well as both 'Good' and 'Outstanding' ratings. Mark undertakes visits on behalf of Platinum Care Consultancy in a number of residential School settings. These include settings designated for care and education of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, learning difficulties, sensory impairment, physical disabilities and health conditions.

Standard 3 Visits

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

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

3.2 Monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

During visits opportunities are also taken to:

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

Introduction and Context for this visit

Linden Lodge is a day and residential Special Needs School for pupils with Vision and Sensory Impairment. It occupies a 3-acre campus close to the centre of London and has a range of specialist departments. The school roll has not changed significantly since my last visit.

As I arrived for this Standard 3 visit the Head of Residential was engaged in a meeting, and as a result the initial context update was undertaken by the Co-Head designated to Residential. The Head of Residential then joined us, and we moved over to the residential setup to conduct the majority of the visit (Standard 3 mandatory areas and other components of the visit).

In terms of the context of the residential setup I was informed that there have been 2 new students join the residential setup since my last visit in the summer term. There has also been 1 member of the residential community has taken a break recently after the nominating local authority had proposed adaptations to living arrangements, but the description of the dialogue that took place made it very clear that the best interests of the boarder were central to the way things have panned out. The boarder is set to return next week for their last year at Linden Lodge. This has resulted in minimal disruption and a supportive process has been followed. The staff have placed the learner's needs at the centre of their deliberations and negotiated sensibly to support all parties.

I was informed that there is residential cohort of 16 boarders at present, and that the recent staffing additions have settled well. Notably the appointment of the Deputy Residential Child Care Manager has been a great success and has seen the Head of Residential feeling more able to focus on wider leadership and strategy work. Supervisions for all staff are now taking place every month (and will continue to do so until the Christmas break, when this will be reviewed with staff). This reflects an awareness of the need to respond to the areas for improvement as identified in the last residential OFSTED inspection, and it would be wise to consider this being a part of the wider residential improvement plan and SCCIF audit.

The start to the school year has been smooth, and greater collaboration with school staff is taking place. There has been one staff member leave residential, but another that has returned from relatively long term absence commented upon the calm environment. This is testament to the work undertaken by the staff and leadership to keep the quality of care at the forefront of thinking when all decisions are made, and reflects a navigation of change (in many ways) that has been impressive over the past year or so.

As part of this visit I covered a wide range of initiatives and discussed support in the next few visits. The Head of Residential informed me that upcoming work will see a new member of the governing body undertake a visit in the next few days, with a focus on curriculum. There is a strategy discussion to be held with the Head of 6th form to explore possible uses of Life Skills Challenges and the Wheel of Independence. There are more aspects of these discussions, and plans for me to review partially completed work that is contained in the various sections of the report below. Overall this was a pleasing and progressive visit.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor
<p><u>Residential Improvement Planning & the SCCIF</u> To further develop the recently updated Improvement plan and consider incorporating an audit of the SCCIF into this process.</p>	<p><u>Response</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCCIF will demonstrate residential improvements. Audit will be undertaken against the SCCIF. Staff and young people surveys will show progress, and improvements. <p><u>Verification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is underway with a weekly meeting. HOR then attends SLT and updates from this. It is in rough format at present. HOR will add to this,

	and have ready for next visit. Staff and young people surveys are with families; results will be available in term 2 as well.
<p>Case Study Development</p> <p>To consider how best to showcase the strong work that goes on within both residential and therapy teams – please see higher up in this report for discussion around this with both the Head of Residential and the Therapy Lead.</p>	<p><u>Response</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study will showcase the way in which therapy is designed in a bespoke holistic way. National Minimum Standards and SCCIF will show the young people's experiences and life opportunities. September 2023 <p><u>Verification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HOT has produced and is under discussion between HOR and HOT on a weekly basis. MG to review and consult in term 2.

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

The Head of Residential informed me that there have been no incidents that have required referral to external support services since my last visit in the Summer term. I followed up on the boarder that had been taken into hospital last term, and was informed that he has not yet returned to school, but is doing well, and owing to his diagnosis being changed there is a requirement for 2:1 being sought approval for with his local authority. In the meantime, contact has been maintained on a regular basis across the summer and into this term by staff and peers. This all reflects positively on the safeguarding oversight for mind and body.

On the day of the visit, the Deputy Residential Child Care Manager was undertaking DSL Level 3 Training, another sign of the depth of oversight related to safeguarding. The detail surrounding the induction of new residents and adaptations to the premises are another example of the detail that goes into ensuring residents are safe.

As a result of this visit I remain of the opinion that safeguarding practices are strong at Linden Lodge and I have no concerns.

Mandatory Areas

Topic	Comments
<p>Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 20.9</p>	<p>The Head of Residential explained that there have again been no missing episodes and no exclusions since the last Standard 3 visit.</p> <p>Attendance figures for this year to date for boarding students is running at 94.3% and the figure for day pupils is 93.4%. These attendance figures remain slightly more positive for boarders, indicating that boarding helps to increase attendance. The figures for boarding attendance have also increased since the last visit, again this is clearly a healthy sign at this early stage in the school year.</p>
<p>Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3</p>	<p>The Head of Residential informed me that there have been no complaints raised since the last visit in the Summer term. The feedback received related to the induction of new residents in this visit validates the fact that the process is extremely supportive and leads to excellent collaboration, thereby meaning that discussion happens regularly. Communication is strong with families, and complaints are therefore very unlikely.</p>
<p>Sanctions 20.6</p>	<p>The Head of Residential informed me that there have once again been no sanctions applied since my last visit in the Summer term. The interactions I experienced with boarders in my visit were as positive as ever – link to consultations.</p>

	The Head of Residential also informed me that the school is set to join a DFE initiated behaviour hub, with a connection to an Outstanding Provider. This seems set to involve weekly dialogue, and I have offered to review paperwork in subsequent Standard 3 visits, as well as potentially undertaking a consultation with this connected provider to exemplify the impact.
Restraint (including restrictive interventions) 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7	The Head of Residential explained that there have been again no occasions when restrictive interventions have been used since my last visit in the Summer term. All that I saw in this visit reassured me that the circumstances when a restrictive intervention may occur remain extremely unlikely owing to the responsive management of boarders by staff based on their needs. In this visit there was a feeling of homeliness and calm in the residents. If anything, I felt it was the calmest that I have seen the residents in a while.
Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)	The Head of Residential explained that all Risk Assessments, Personal Plans and All About Me overviews are progressing through reviews between the Head of Residential, the Deputy and a Senior Staff member. They then each quality assure each other's work in a round-robin WQA process.
Placement Plans 7.2	This review process is built upon the solid previous work, and as a result I have no concerns. It was agreed that I would undertake a sampling exercise in my next visit in term 2 across all staff that have been involved in the process.
Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.	
<p>During this visit I explored recent and planned building developments in the light of the recent OFSTED report and its recommendations related to building development. This is set to be reflected in the SCCIF review that is ongoing, and the residential improvement plan that I intend to scrutinise in term 2.</p> <p>The Head of Residential gave me a detailed tour during which I observed the following changes and plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A bathroom on the ground floor has been fully refurbished to a high standard across the summer. There are plans to install a shower bed asap, and plumbing stands ready. - A second is planned, and the need for this was highlighted as a comparator to the above work. Splits in the lino and general wear and tear is noticeable and this clearly needs doing. - The Head of Residential explained that the entrance hall area that leads into Richley House is set for a refurbishment to make it more welcoming and less sterile. Plans for sofas and information boards were detailed. - The general wall decorations are set for a makeover as well. The Head of Residential explained the aims behind this and the fact that the boarders will be consulted over this. <p>Overall the Head of Residential explained that funding is being sourced to support this work, and I agreed to follow this up in subsequent visits. I will look to review plans and meet with key site and premises staff in the next few visits.</p> <p>That having been said, and whilst the upgrades are clearly needed, the buildings remain a homely place to board and the staff are focussed on ensuring they are maintained effectively – placing the needs of the boarders at the centre of how they are used.</p>	

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 Head of Residential

During this visit the Head of Residential and I discussed recent developments and undertook a tour of residential, in which I observed boarders enjoying their evening. One young person explained that she had been working in the café, and had served the Head of Residential with his lunch. She was very pleased to share this anecdote and the warmth between them was evident. Later in the tour I was shown the Café location in the centre of the main school, and the setup was explained to me. 2 pupils work together to offer sandwiches, drinks and snacks, and then process payment using a chip and pin device. This is a strong example of pupils experiencing real life skills in a controlled and safe setting. It was a very impressive aspect of learning to witness.

During the tour it was evident that the boarding setup is very much a 'home environment away from home'. The relaxed manner of the pupils was clear and, although privacy is enabled, they are encouraged to undertake everyday tasks. One boarder was leaving with staff support to go to the laundry and do her own washing, whilst others were relaxing in soft play areas, or in their rooms. The vibe was one of purposeful home activity.

The Head of Residential undertook check-ins with all staff on shift during my tour, and managed questions about the evening activities, as well as checking on staff and pupil welfare. There is a real sense of team. The Head of Residential explained to me the system in use for waking night staff to undertake checks on each boarder, using a personalised QR code that led them directly to relevant recording systems using mobile devices. This supports the boarders well and enables staff work to be accurate and consistent.

Other areas of discussion in my time with the Head of Residential are detailed below:

- There was a recent Summer School operated which several boarders attended. There is to be a full write-up shared with the school community very soon, and I will report on this in my next visit.
- There is a review meeting being held imminently to explore the possible uses of new initiatives related to the 24 hour curriculum (namely the 'Wheel of Independence' and 'Life Skills Challenges'. The Head of Residential is an advocate for the practicability of these approaches and I suggested that I will follow up on any developments in term 2.
- The Head of Residential and I discussed developments surrounding the Residential Improvement Plan and the SCCIF audit at length, and it is clear that both are pieces of work that are ongoing between SLT. I suggested that I will look to conduct a supportive review in my next Standard 3 visit.
- The Head of Residential shared a flyer that details the Vision Statement and Objectives for the academic year for the school overall. This captures the essence of the statement of purpose in some vision statements and then details 4 key priorities for the year to July 2024. These priorities discuss consistency across all pathways for all pupils, pupil centred approaches, development of independence, work alongside external professionals to future proof and grow, and forward planning for post-19 work to be considered by families from as young as 14.

These are worthy goals, and I am looking forward to seeing how the residential service aligns with this when I review the RIP and SCCIF work next term.

2 x Parent Consultations, that were targeted at parents of new boarders and focussing very closely upon transition support.

Following this Standard 3 visit, I contacted parents of 2 newly started boarders to investigate their views upon the support that has been received to enable boarding to start as smoothly as possible.

Both new boarders are attending Linden Lodge School for the first time following Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 Transfer, and whilst one has experienced boarding before at the primary age range, this is a new experience for both families in that both live north of London (well outside the M25 circle), and the commute to Linden Lodge was considered simply too far. Both families expressed that the distance involved has been a major factor in the decision to pursue boarding, but there was a natural concern at the fact that such distance is involved. The support offered by the school in terms of advance visits for the pupils and the parents, contact with boarding staff, therapy team, education staff and support from existing parents were all commented upon as being very important in the decision to board straight away. It was clear in the detail presented to me by one of the parents that an exhaustive process had been followed to make sure that Linden Lodge was the right place – this had been a great success.

Both parents spoke highly of the transition support that has been offered from a wide range of sources, and this is a testament to the hard work of the staff team. It has been an emotional wrench in many ways for the parents, but the work that has continued in the first few weeks of boarding (phone calls, video messaging) has been extremely important for all concerned. One parent stated that not only was the contact important and positive feedback is crucial, but that they could 'hear how happy XXX is in their voice on the phone'.

Staff were praised for the speed of return of any contact, and for their general helpfulness. Both also felt that the needs of their children were being met very well, they were engaged in lots of positive activities. One stated that they were concerned to an extent over the travel in general at the beginning and end of the week, but that the care and support on offer was impressive so far.

The potential impact of a place at Linden Lodge came over most eloquently when one of the parents explained to me that whilst in mainstream at Key Stage 2, in spite of the efforts of the school, a degree of isolation was developing for their child, and that lots of the assurances given in the advance visits had been helpful in making the decision to accept a place. The nature of the boarder's needs made Linden Lodge a natural choice, but there was still a degree of fear over social isolation, but the experiences so far have confirmed that social mixing has been happening already, having made friends.

Overall, both of the parents explained that the decision to board such a distance from home was not easy, but the wraparound support given during the transition process has meant that there are no regrets at all so far, and the start that has been made has been an overwhelmingly positive experience.

I am aware of the depth of planning and range of the transition support that takes place when a new boarder begins at Linden Lodge, and I am happy to report that the impact is as positive as it could be for the parents spoken to in this set of consultations.

--

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision
<p>This was a further very pleasing visit in which the leaders and staff that I spoke to have shown that they are focussed on building upon the solid foundations that residential has, and taking Linden Lodge’s provision forward. Care remains of a high standard, and this was exemplified in many ways in this visit, but most notable perhaps in the comments of the new parents that I spoke to.</p> <p>I would once again like to thank everyone at the Linden Lodge for their continued welcome into the school each time that I visit. The aspirations expressed to me in this visit make me even more positive for the next year, and I am looking forward to my subsequent visits and seeing how the plans are put into action.</p>
<p>Name: Mark Goode Date: 22/09/2023</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Leadership and Management</u> It is recommended that work continues related to the Residential Improvement Plan and use of the SCCIF to drive the service forward, as well as pressing forward with discussions related to the Wheel of Independence and Life Skills Challenges. Then to be ready to share the documents and plans as they stand in the next Standard 3 visit in term 2.</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.</p>	<p>Young people’s progress is regularly monitored using various platforms and data.</p> <p>We will be evidencing young people’s progress, doing case studies to demonstrate the young person’s progress.</p> <p>QR Code recording system will demonstrate the data and how the young people are monitored during the night.</p>	<p>Term 2</p>

Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period.		
<p>Care Planning For the detailed and comprehensive review process to be completed and Plans available for scrutiny in my next Standard 3 visit.</p> <p>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The overall experiences and progress of children Professional practice consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children. Professional practice responds positively to children's complex and changing needs. There are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of wider dissemination.</p>	<p>Which will be available for sharing, on Marks next visit.</p> <p>We will demonstrate the young people's progress, regularly monitored using various platforms and data.</p> <p>Case studies will be shared at Marks next visit.</p>	Term 2
<p>Building plans To continue the development work and enable a series of consultations to take place related to the plans into the new calendar year when I attend for the Standard 3 visit in term 3.</p> <p>SCCIF (Good Criteria): The effectiveness of Leaders and Managers The head of school ensures that the physical environment is maintained to a high standard, is comfortable and meets the needs of the children. Any damage or wear and tear is quickly and regularly repaired.</p>	<p>The improvement plan for Boarding is currently in process Which will be available for sharing, on Marks next visit.</p>	Term 3

Head of Residential's Comments

A nice report to read Mark, has managed to capture how we support the young people. Whilst also showing how residential is constantly evolving and adapting to meeting young people's needs. Improving the environment with the young people at the forefront at all time. Seeing how the staff engage with the young people and understanding their individual requirements
We are very proud of our young people's achievements and constantly strive to build strong working relationships with families. Which is shown within the report.

Name: Danny Sinclair

Date: 26.09.2023

Head Teachers' Comments

It was fantastic to read how well the new students (and parents) have settled into the residential provision at Linden Lodge. The collaborative and conscientious work that goes into new students starting really shone through in the feedback from the parents.

Name: Sarah Norris

Date: 29.09.2023

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

This is another positive report and the staff should be commended on that.

It is helpful to understand the authors findings are supported by evidence from several sources. It is also helpful to read, over time that the author reports on the evolving and implementation of plans to improve the care and welfare of children.

We also note the very positive feedback from parents of two children who are new boarders in respect of preparation of the family for the move to residential care.

Name: Kieran Travers

Date: 19 November 2023