



Standard 3 Visit

Name of Service	Linden Lodge School
Date of previous visit	29/04/2024
Date of this visit	04/07/2024
Standard 3 Visitor	Mark Goode
Time of visit	14.45
Visit Supported by	<p>Sarah Norris – Co-Headteacher responsible for Residential Danny Sinclair – Head of Residential Vicky Watson – Deputy Residential Childcare Manager</p>

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.

I arrived for this visit in the 3rd from last week of the school year in term 6 and observed the tail end of the end of year school graduation for many (including the 3 leavers referenced lower down this document). I was greeted by the Co-Head, Head of Residential and his Deputy – and we sat and undertook a very pleasant catch up on events since my last visit in term 5, before I moved into the Residential Setup with the Deputy Residential Childcare Manager. I later undertook the mandatory checks alongside the Head of Residential, and sought feedback from parents in the days following my visit.

In terms of the context of the residential setup, I was informed that there has still been a high level of interest in new residents joining the boarding provision, but the Head of Residential explained that funding was proving to be a barrier in some cases. We reflected upon the trends around the different counties and provisions that I support, and we both speculated on the potential impact of the General Election that was taking place that week.

I enquired about the staffing situation as there had been a reflection that things had been somewhat tricky around the time of my last visit with the Head of Residential commenting that absence had risen at that time. I was informed that the situation has settled down and there has been a successful period of recruitment (although the newest staff member had not yet started).

Other developments are captured under the mandatory checks section and in the consultations that I have undertaken in this visit.

Areas requiring action from previous visit

Action Point from Previous Visit	Provider's Response and Verification by Independent Visitor
<p><u>Premises and Maintenance</u> For the reorganisation of the shared office to be completed, and for the ongoing programme of maintenance to be carried on in line with the recommendations that OFSTED made.</p>	<p><u>Response between visits</u> Office will be completed before Mark's next visit he will be provided with an update on the maintenance programme.</p> <p><u>Verification during this visit</u> Upon my arrival for this visit I was shown the completed refurbishment to the office. This is now organised as a shared work space with allocated 'hot desk' spaces and it was in full use during my visit with therapy and other staff co-working there together. It is a very useful and supportive development that is helping with staff collegiality.</p>
<p><u>Future Planning for Residents that are approaching the end of their time at Linden Lodge</u> For the staff to continue to work on next steps for leavers, and to ensure that support enables families to have access to all information that they can to make these decisions (including the innovative Careers Fair).</p>	<p><u>Response</u> Mark will be provided with an update on the three young people leaving at the end of the academic year. Mark will be given an update on the Careers Fairs.</p> <p><u>Verification during this visit</u> The Head of Residential and I discussed the situation for the three leavers in this visit following on from the support and careers fair. Two of these are moving to the same provider. Transition support is in place and liaison with families is well established. One of these boarders has a situation where a degree of respite support is being sought. The third resident has yet to secure a placement and the Head of Residential explained that this is leading to some anxiety for the family. There is significant support in place from Linden Lodge and I agreed that I would seek an update on this into September with the Head of Residential.</p>

How well Children and Young People are Safeguarded.

The Head of Residential informed me that there have been no issues of concern internally or requiring the support of external agencies related to the boarding cohort since my last visit in term 5.

There is a constant reflective focus upon boarders, and student safety at Linden Lodge is reflected in the record keeping and in consistent approach to care. During this visit I observed the boarders arrive and all brought their own care plans along, which staff constantly have access to. These contain their profiles and descriptions of needs. If they cannot carry them themselves, then staff deliver them. This was just the tip of the iceberg related to care and safety as I observed it in this visit. I have no concerns and remain of the opinion that safeguarding practices are strong at Linden Lodge.

Mandatory Areas

Topic	Comments
Records of attendance/ exclusion/ missing episodes 20.9	During this visit the Residential Lead explained that there have again been no missing episodes and no exclusions since the last Standard 3 visit in term 4. Attendance figures since my last visit in term 5 have averaged at 90.7% for boarders, with a corresponding figure for day pupils of 90.6%. These attendance figures remain slightly more positive for boarders, indicating that boarding helps to increase attendance.
Complaints 19.1, 19.2, 19.3	The Head of Residential informed me that there have been no complaints since the date of my last visit in term 5. The atmosphere that exuded in the houses upon the arrival of the boarders when I was present, and the vibrancy of the relationships between staff and boarders made it clear to me just why this is.
Sanctions 20.6	I was once again informed that there have been no sanctions applied since my last visit in term 5. The readiness of the care plans (as delivered by the boarders themselves) and the way staff know their needs so well, made me see that such events are extremely rare. The discussions reminding one boarder about the agreements over mobile phone use that I observed were a case in point and a clear example of gentle insistence that I would suggest is the hallmark of great quality oversight.
Restraint (including restrictive interventions) 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7	I was once again informed that there have been no incidents since my last visit in term 4 that have required any restraint or restrictive intervention. I consider the likelihood of this taking place to be virtually nil based on this visit.
Risk Assessments Appendix B (11,16)	During this visit I explored the processes related to the risk assessment and placement plans that are in place at Linden Lodge, and the Head of Residential shared a sample with me following the visit. The planning that takes place is checked every half term and covers very clear detail. We discussed the fact the boxes for review are completed by hand and retained as a hard copy as evidence of reviews. The work is of a very high standard. I also noted that the boarders themselves brought them along as they started their boarding evening, which was a lovely feature of the evening.
Placement Plans 7.2	

Suitability of the building, furnishings & external environment.

I once again toured the whole Residential premises in this visit and was impressed with the detail of work that is ongoing to support the Residential experience. The Garden was in use as the weather was pleasantly warm and this central space never fails to impress. The grass and equipment (supported by cushioned flooring and subtly adapted equipment) mean that boarders can access the equipment on many levels. Please see my reflection upon the time spent with the boarders below in the consultations section for further details.

The Leaders that I spoke to informed me that the following is set to see investment between now and the start of the Autumn term in September:

- There is a programme of refurbishment planned across the Summer that has a focus on the wet rooms/bathrooms on the lower floors.
- There is a strong desire to see the main corridors redecorated with different colours and panels planned.
- There are triaged priorities for a block of funding that was received (Fire Doors being the main one).

In addition, the Leaders showcased that there is a plan to add a new sensory space in a former downstairs toilet space, there have been kitchen cupboards donated that are going to be used in the downstairs kitchen space, and the medical room is in the process of being upgraded.

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.

Consultations with the Co-Headteacher, Head of Residential and Deputy Residential Childcare Manager.

This visit saw me spending time with all three leaders of the Residential Service and I received updates upon a range of areas as detailed in the recommendations catch-up higher up this report and detailed here:

The Co-Headteacher explained that much of the work that is detailed in the section directly above this has been sanctioned by the CEO of the Academy Trust that oversees the school, and this is a positive indicator when considering the need to respond to the suggestions in the last OFSTED report over the facilities.

The Deputy Residential Childcare Manager and I discussed recent events and features of the service as detailed below:

- A recent Talent Show took place in which most boarders performed in one way or another (some supported by staff, but others very much solo). The key feature emerging from this reflection was its value in enabling the boarders to illustrate their growing confidence to do this in a safe space for them. This is discussed in reports that go home and we also discussed how views are captured for all (including boarders that may not be able to communicate openly). I suggested a visit to a provider where I feel this is done really well for pupils that need help to communicate their views.
- There has been a recently held 'Parkside Garden Party' event that saw the public in the surrounding area adjacent to the school on the Wimbledon Parkside open their gardens. The boarders took part and visited the open gardens alongside staff and had a lovely time. This is all connected to a charitable trust.
- I was also informed that the week after my visit is set to see a number of the boarders taken camping off site. There are 8 boarders of the 12 students in attendance. The Co-Head of Residential is set to stay in the school overnight supporting those that are not attending, but there is an 'on-site camping experience' with tents on site being delivered to these boarders so that they get something akin to the experience as well.
- I was informed that boarders have recently been going outside of the school grounds to local shops to use their cash to buy provisions and snacks for themselves (with support).

Time spent with Boarders and Staff in this visit

In this visit I spent an extended period of time observing and chatting to boarders as they settled into their evening. In the period when boarders arrived, they all came in in close succession in a way that can be described best as happy teenagers coming home, a testament to the homeliness that the Residential Service engenders in my view.

Then the boarders can have a snack, which many do, and others chose to settle in their rooms for a while before taking part in the main activity for the evening. During this period, I spoke to most of the boarders about their recent news and caught up with a few that I regularly speak to. Many were chatty and remembered me from previous visits, which is always pleasant. As commented on elsewhere in this report, one boarder then attempted to negotiate time using a mobile phone with staff. This was clearly not something that could be agreed to but the boarder was testing boundaries. The way the staff member navigated this was really positive and a firmness was on display that was based upon great knowledge of the boarder and the agreements.

I then moved between the different spaces where the boarders and other students were engaged in activity. This included use of the outdoor adventure playground space (boarders pushed each other on the swing, roundabout and also enjoyed the different textures of the various benches and the trampoline.

Other boarders were enjoying therapy based swimming with staff and hydrotherapy staff (they have access to 2 sessions a week). This was an obvious highlight for the boarders and the expressions of enjoyment were plain to see. We also visited a sports hall space where others were enjoying play activities as well.

Parent Consultation of a recently started boarder

I discussed discussing the Residential experience with a very recently arrived boarder (on their first evening actually) with the Head of Residential and we agreed that a better time to contact them would be in September when they have boarded. Then in the visit itself the boarder's parents and I met as they arrived to support their son in settling in. I explained my role as an Independent Visitor and we agreed that a call next term would be useful to gauge their views after a period of settling in.

I then called the parents of another boarder in the days following the visit and the discussion is detailed below:

- The parent explained that the boarder has been a pupil at Linden Lodge for close to 10 years, but has recently begun boarding this year as a 15 year old. This decision has been taken as the family made the decision that being a teenager has meant they want the chance to spend more time with peers from school, develop social skills, and whilst independence is not really a consideration owing to the boarders' level of disability, the opportunity to develop as much as possible related to sociability is a key factor.
- The parent informed me that residential has been very helpful so far in supporting both the boarder and the family in general. The boarder clearly enjoys the boarding stays and is excited to be a part of the boarding community. The parent also feels that the boarder has bonded well with staff and boarding peers.
- The parent went on to explain that the school navigated finding a specified staff member quickly, there was good training undertaken and a good piece of handover. The family visited the boarding service as part of the induction process and commented how satisfied they were with the accommodation and support.
- There were also positive comments related to communication between school, residential and home, and that staff are very supportive. They have no concerns about the Residential Service.

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

Summary of Visit and Quality of Provision
<p>This was another very pleasant visit in which I was able to catch up with staff and boarders, and once again saw the high quality of care on display.</p> <p>There are a range of developments that are planned in the buildings that may see Linden Lodge have a different feel to an extent when I next attend in the Autumn term.</p> <p>I would like to thank everyone at Linden Lodge for their warm welcome during my I visit and I am looking forward to next term already. I wish everyone a restful Summer Holiday.</p>
<p>Name: Mark Goode Date: 10/07/2024</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS AND/OR RESPONSE FOR THIS VISIT		
Actions	Comments from Provider	Expected Completion Date
<p><u>Building and Premises Developments</u> For the Leaders to implement the stated intentions related to the development of different parts of the buildings over the Summer Holidays.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The Effectiveness of Leaders and Managers</u> Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children and influential in changing the lives of those in their care.</p>		Term 1 2024-25
<p><u>Onwards plans for the 3rd boarder</u> For the eventual destination for the final leaver as mentioned in the report above to be supported, and details to be available for me to review in my next visit in the Autumn term.</p> <p><u>SCCIF (Outstanding Criteria): The overall experiences and progress of children</u> 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>		Term 1 2024-25

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Head of Residential's Comments

Thank you so much for your positive feedback in the report. I really appreciate the details you have included about areas we have developed in Richley House and our future plans for upgrading the environment. Thank you for the time you spent, with the young people, listening to their participation in the residential activities and seeing how settled they are in boarding. It was nice to hear the feedback from a parent regarding their child setting well in boarding and the support they have received.

Name: Danny Sinclair

Date: 16th July 2023

Head Teachers' Comments

I was pleased that during this unannounced visit that it coincided with our Graduation. It was a great opportunity to have Mark see the parents and families of our leavers at such an auspicious occasion. This visit also aligned with a first night of a new boarder so am delighted for Mark to see the vibrant and changeable community of young people at Richley House. I was particularly pleased to share the confirmation of our residential works and improvements that are taking place during the summer holidays and look forward to welcoming Mark at the start of the new academic year.

Name: Sarah Norris

Date: 17th July 2024

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

It is helpful to read this positive report from the Independent Visitor. It is full of positive evidence of the good quality care and safety of the residents at Richley House. It is especially positive to about students return to Richley House in the way of "happy teenagers returning home".

The IV tracks plans and aspirations for students at Richley House well and it is helpful to read about that progress. It is also encouraging to read about ownership of students of their own care plans when they physically bring those plans to discussions for review and update.

The Governor Board will support that work by the IV to ensure those issues are reported and discussed at the Autumn Term Board meeting.

Name: Kieran Travers

Date: 24th September 2024