

Oakhill Secure Training Centre

Chalgrove Field
Oakhill
Milton Keynes
MK5 6AJ

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the secure training centres joint inspection framework

Information about this secure training centre

Oakhill Secure Training Centre is operated by G4S Care and Justice Services (G4S). The centre provides accommodation for up to 80 children, male and female, aged 12 to 19 years, who are serving a custodial sentence or who are remanded to custody by the courts. There were 70 children resident at the STC at the time of the inspection: 67 boys and three girls.

Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities by G4S. Healthcare services are provided by G4S Health Services UK.

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 February 2025

Dates of last inspection: 21 to 25 October 2024

Judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
December 2024	Monitoring	No judgement
October 2024	Full	Inadequate
March 2024	Assurance	No serious or widespread concerns

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspectors evaluated:

- the care of children and young people
- the safety of children and young people
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people under the secure training centres inspection framework.

This inspection was carried out in accordance with Rule 43 of the Secure Training Centre Rules (produced in compliance with Section 47 of the Prison Act 1952, as amended by Section 6(2) of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994), and Section 80 of the Children Act 1989. His Majesty's Chief Inspector's power to inspect secure training centres is provided by Section 146 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Joint inspections involving Ofsted, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) are permitted under paragraph 7 of Schedule 13 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This enables Ofsted's His Majesty's Chief Inspector to act jointly with other public authorities for the efficient and effective exercise of his functions.

All inspections carried out by Ofsted, HMIP and CQC contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. OPCAT requires that all places of detention are visited regularly by independent bodies – known as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) – which monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The director of Oakhill Secure Training Centre remains a strong advocate for children. She and her leadership team have taken swift and appropriate action in addressing the serious shortfalls identified at the last inspection in October 2024. As a result, good progress is being made against the recommendations. A targeted improvement plan has been refreshed, quality assurance mechanisms have been strengthened, the response to children's complaints has improved and staffing levels have been maintained. Refreshed protocols now inform a more robust oversight of when children are separated from others. The practice of locking children in their rooms if they refuse to attend education has ceased. The children and staff confirmed this. The use of separation is appropriate, reducing in frequency and duration, and the rationale behind decisions is clear.

Education provision was not assessed at this inspection, and the recommendations relating to education will be reviewed at the next full inspection.

Progress against an action plan is reviewed through weekly leadership meetings. This provides greater assurance that appropriate actions are being taken at pace to improve the care children receive.

At the full inspection in October 2024, the CQC took enforcement against the healthcare provider as a result of serious failures. At this inspection, CQC inspectors assessed the action taken since the previous inspection, and a separate report will be published on the CQC's website detailing the findings. A dedicated health improvement board has been established and regular meetings are held, providing mechanisms to monitor and direct improvement planning, to hold the healthcare provider to account. Regular meetings enable leaders to be agile in responding to issues as they arise. Additional independent scrutiny, such as reviewing pharmacy standards and infection control, is assuring leaders that progress is being made. As a result, health provision is showing some improvements.

The workforce has continued to stabilise. The centre has revised the terms and conditions for some staff, which is enabling the centre to be more competitive in a narrow workforce market. This has led to the recruitment of additional education staff, including English and physical education teachers and learning support assistants. The complement of secure care officers remains above normal staffing levels, preserving children's routines and enabling them to develop more secure relationships with staff.

Relationships between children and staff are mostly warm, demonstrating real care and consideration for children. Children can identify a trusted member of staff they can turn to if they have any worries, describing staff as 'understanding' and that staff 'know how to support them when they feel overwhelmed'.

Staff reported that they receive good support and opportunities to develop their skills in accessing relevant training. Supervision provides an opportunity for managers to reinforce positive messages about staff performance, review staff training needs, reflect on areas of practice, and, when needed, identify improvement actions with clear timescales. Leaders have very recently developed a tracking tool, but it is too soon to see the impact of this in ensuring that all staff receive regular supervision.

Children understand how to make a complaint, and their concerns are taken seriously and responded to. The response to children's complaints has improved. The introduction of additional quality assurance mechanisms is ensuring that investigations are more robust. Leaders have identified a theme in complaints about children's property, such as following a move and property is missing. As a result, the newly appointed property officer is a positive addition, but it is too soon to see the impact for children.

While children's rooms are well furnished and personalised, space on each living unit is very limited and cramped for the number of children and the staff looking after them. Generally, there is a small kitchen and a small lounge/dining area with two narrow corridors either side where bedrooms are located. This limited space impacts on the ability for children to have privacy (except by going to their bedrooms), personal space and on their overall quality of care.

Safeguarding concerns are managed effectively. Any actions are appropriate and help to keep children safer.

Management oversight of physical force is thorough. The increased use of body worn cameras is enabling leaders to both monitor their use as well as strengthen investigations relating to any concerns, safeguarding both children and staff alike.

Most staff have a clear understanding of children's risks and needs. The use of 'My Story' plans provides a quick guide for staff to help them to understand the needs of each child and to then provide appropriate support. However, these are not always readily available or as up to date as they could be, which could compromise the care children receive.

If children self-harm, the response is mostly effective. Staff ensure that emotional and practical support is offered. Safety and well-being plans are clear, detailed and thorough, providing clear directions for staff to follow to minimise risks to children.

What needs to improve:

Recommendations

■ *Improve the quality and impact of health support for children by:

- ensuring that children’s wide-ranging health needs are swiftly assessed;
- ensuring that appropriate and timely interventions are delivered to meet children’s assessed needs, in line with national guidance;
- ensuring that there are clear care plans in place that are reflective of children’s current needs;
- ensuring that all health records are accurate and accessible to staff;
- ensuring that all healthcare areas meet infection prevention and control standards;
- carrying out effective medicine audits and ensuring safe storage practice for medicines;
- ensuring that governance systems are accurate and effective at identifying shortfalls in the service provided.

*Progress was monitored during this inspection and will be addressed in more detail in a separate CQC report.

■ Improve the quality of education by:

- having sufficient teachers and learning support assistants with the relevant subject knowledge and skills and supporting the development of their pedagogic skills, as necessary;
- reviewing the curriculum so that it meets the needs of children, and that its content is broad and ambitious to enable children to learn as much as possible;
- improving the progress that children make in English and completing the launch of an effective reading strategy, monitoring its impact and the improvement of all children’s reading skills.

■ Improve leadership and management by strengthening quality assurance arrangements for:

- education, to identify and improve key areas of teaching and assessment and to monitor a broader range of children’s progress in knowledge, skills and behaviours over and above qualification achievement, and to gain a true picture of children’s development;
- *healthcare, so that there is a good understanding of the quality and impact of health provision for children, so that weaknesses can be identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.

**Progress was monitored during this inspection and will be addressed in more detail in a separate CQC report.

- Improve children's resettlement by helping to prepare them to return to the community through the delivery of high-quality interventions that address the reasons why they are placed at the centre.
- Improve care planning so that plans are comprehensive, integrated across the centre, effective in tracking children's progress and provide staff with sufficient information about children's individual needs to promote consistent practice.
- The Youth Custody Service should conduct a review with the centre's director of the number of children that the centre can appropriately look after, so that children's needs are met in respect of the space and services available to them.

Secure training centre details

Provider name: G4S Care and Justice Services

Director: Michelle Price

Inspectors

Lisa Summers, His Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector, Ofsted

Thirza Smith, Social Care Regulatory Inspector, Ofsted

Tash Williams, Social Care Regulatory Inspector, Ofsted

Catherine Raycraft, Inspector, Care Quality Commission

Jacob Foster, Inspector, Care Quality Commission

Esra Sari, Inspector, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons

Shaun Common, His Majesty's Inspector, Quality Assurance Manager, Ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025