

Oakhill Secure Training Centre

Chalgrove Field
Oakhill
Milton Keynes
MK5 6AJ

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the secure training centres 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 61 children resident at the STC at the time of this inspection: 54 boys and seven girls.

Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities by G4S. Healthcare services are provided by DrPA Secure. The commissioning of health services at this centre is the statutory responsibility of NHS England under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 September 2025

This monitoring visit

1. In July 2025, inspectors identified significant weaknesses in practice that were having a negative impact on children's safety, care and well-being. Due to these serious concerns, the Chief Inspectors of Ofsted, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and the Care Quality Commission invoked the Urgent Notification (UN) Protocol and wrote a public letter to the Secretary of State for Justice. This monitoring visit was unannounced and focused on the recommendations raised in July 2025, specifically the issues that led to the inadequate judgement.
2. An interim director and deputy director have been in post at Oakhill Secure Training Centre (STC) since the last inspection and have brought some stability and more effective leadership to the centre. They continue to work with the senior leadership team and collaborate with the local authority designated officer (LADO), the local authority children's services, and the Youth Custody Service (YCS) to start to understand and act on the breadth of the serious concerns identified at the last inspection.

3. Leaders have taken some positive steps to address the recommendations from the last inspection. Improvement plans have been devised to target the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The pace of required improvements in some areas is too slow, and the focus on which improvements are a priority has drifted away from the areas that matter most to children. This means that some children remain at risk of harm.
4. The use of inverted wrist holds as a method to physically restrain children continues at the centre. Since the previous inspection, there have been seven recorded incidents involving this technique, which is known to be pain-inducing and carries inherent risks. Leaders have not taken effective action to eliminate its use. Further, oversight and governance of the use of force are not always consistent and systems intended to monitor and assure safe practice have sometimes failed to help senior leaders to identify and address weaknesses in practice.
5. The centre's safeguarding team is depleted, with interim managers holding key posts. The interim head of safeguarding provides some oversight and governance remotely but does not regularly visit the centre. This is a missed opportunity to stabilise the team, provide assurance and drive the pace of improvement. The centre's safeguarding policies and procedures remain under review.
6. Safeguarding concerns are now referred to the LADO in a timely manner, are shared with the human resources team when required, and are monitored through a revised tracking system, but there are still areas for development. When safeguarding concerns are identified, leaders do not always consider the wider implications or consequences of these incidents, for example if other staff failed to follow centre policies. This prevents leaders from identifying or exploring patterns and trends for individual staff or general practice.
7. Since the last inspection, a collaborative review of safeguarding at the centre has commenced with the local safeguarding partnership, the YCS and G4S. The immense scale of this review means that these findings were not available at the time of this monitoring visit and will be considered at the next inspection.
8. At the time of this monitoring visit, approximately 40% of all centre staff had completed up-to-date mandatory safeguarding training. There is a programme in place for the remaining staff to complete this before the end of the year. The pace of action to address this area of practice is too slow and means that, currently, leaders cannot be assured that all staff understand their personal and collective responsibility for safeguarding children.
9. Staffing levels in education are too low. Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher has now left the centre, as have three teachers who were due to start. This significantly reduces the availability of staff to deliver a varied and interesting curriculum intended to meet the needs of children and their interests and aspirations. The action plan in place to improve the quality of education is basic and there have been no further developments to the curriculum offered to the children. Children who have an education, health and care plan are not having their needs met in education.

10. The appointment of additional staff means that there is now more capacity in the healthcare team to respond to children's physical and mental health needs. The centre's GP is more readily available through weekly on-site clinics and an improved on-call system, and a psychiatrist holds weekly clinics intended to further support children's psychological needs. A pharmacy service now also supports the management of children's medicines. These improvements are in their infancy and the impact for children cannot yet be measured. Since the last inspection, monthly clinical governance meetings have been scheduled to commence in the coming weeks. As these are yet to start, centre leaders cannot be assured that planned improvements will promote a safe and well-led service for children.
11. There has been a positive shift in the leadership culture at the centre, and the interim director continues to review the experience, skills, knowledge, credibility and, where appropriate, the qualifications of the senior leadership team. The interim director and deputy director, and the senior leadership team, are visible across the centre. Children said that they know who these individuals are and what their roles are. A number of staff remain suspended while investigations relating to allegations about staff behaviour with children continue. The interim director has issued clear directives to all staff, setting expectations of professional standards and conduct for all staff and visitors. Staff spoken to said that they welcomed the improvements and changes at the centre and reported feeling motivated in their roles.
12. The YCS has carried out a review of the role, responsibilities and experience of the on-site monitors, identifying some gaps and areas for improvement. An action plan is in place to upskill team members and streamline the contractual areas that don't directly affect children, allowing them to focus on safeguarding children and their day-to-day experiences. Strengthened arrangements for reporting concerns identified by the on-site monitors mean that centre leaders are now formally notified if children's safety, care or well-being are compromised.
13. It is positive that there have been no occasions when children have been removed from group association and separated from their peers since the last inspection. Further, leaders continue to review the incentive scheme across the centre to ensure that all staff implement this consistently, to encourage children to take responsibility for their behaviours and actions. As a result of improved governance and oversight of the scheme, there is now greater fairness and consistency between leaders in the application and removal of sanctions, and better access for girls to the range of rewards available.
14. The practice of deducting money from children to pay a victim surcharge without their consent has now ceased. Centre leaders and other agencies continue to look for a resolution for this issue.
15. There has been an increase in staffing across the centre and senior leaders have introduced a revised overtime incentive scheme. Daily staff deployment meetings mean that gaps in staffing levels are quickly identified and action is taken before these staffing gaps have a negative impact on children's safety, care, visits or planned

activities. This has improved staff morale and children said that there are now more staff available to spend time with them.

16. Most areas of the centre have been cleaned appropriately since the last inspection. Although further work is needed in some communal areas, such as children's lounges, the main kitchen area has been deep cleaned and is now a hygienic environment in which to prepare food and drinks for children.
17. Leaders have acted to ensure that children have adequate meals and access to food in order to prevent them feeling hungry. An additional evening meal in the form of a 'snack box' has been introduced, in consultation with children, and offers a range of hot and cold foods. Children spoke positively about this improvement and praised leaders for taking account of their views and opinions.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
July 2025	Full	Inadequate
February 2025	Assurance	No judgement
December 2024	Monitoring	No judgement
October 2024	Full	Inadequate

What needs to improve:

Recommendations

- Ensure the safeguarding of children by:
 - reviewing and confirming that the centre’s policies and procedures reflect statutory guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023), and that they are understood by all staff and followed, leading to all safeguarding concerns being reported without delay to the internal safeguarding team, and that they are shared as appropriate without delay with human resources and with the LADO and/or local authority children’s services; and
 - ensuring that regular and accurate tracking is effective and that all actions are completed.
- If children are separated for extended periods, there must be a clear recorded justification for the ongoing use of separation, and when the legal criteria are no longer met, the separation must end.
- Cease immediately the use of inverted wrist holds as a method to physically restrain children.
- Improve the quality and impact of health support for children by:
 - ensuring that children’s wide-ranging physical and mental health needs are understood and swiftly met;
 - ensuring that all health records are accurate, and appropriate information is shared across the centre to inform the care children receive;
 - ensuring that medicines are administered safely;
 - ensuring appropriate storage of specimens and samples; and
 - ensuring governance systems and structures promote a safe and well-led service for children.
- Establish and maintain a positive and proactive leadership culture. Leaders in all areas of the centre must have sufficient experience, skills, knowledge, credibility and, where appropriate, qualifications for the role they undertake. Leaders should be visible to all staff across the centre, exhibit and set clear expectations of high standards of professional conduct and be role models for all staff at all levels. Governance and quality assurance mechanisms should support all improvement activity and test the effectiveness of new policies and procedures.
- Senior leaders in the YCS should undertake a review of the roles, responsibilities and experience of the on-site monitors. To be effective, on-site monitors require sufficient experience, skills and knowledge in working with children and an understanding of their needs so as to hold the STC to account if it fails to provide good enough standards of care, safety and well-being for children.

- Improve the quality of education by:
 - reviewing the current curriculum so that it meets the needs of all children and its content is broad and ambitious, to enable children to learn as much as possible;
 - understanding children’s ambitions and goals so they can be appropriately supported, including through accredited programmes;
 - ensuring that children with an education, health and care plan or with undiagnosed learning needs receive dedicated support to help them make the progress they are capable of.
- Improve the oversight of the incentives scheme to ensure it is implemented consistently by all staff and improve the scheme for girls so that they are not disadvantaged.
- Improve the cleanliness of children’s units and the main kitchen.
- Review the length of time between children’s meals so that children are suitably nourished and have adequate portions, and so that supplies to each house unit are appropriate to meet children’s needs.
- Review monies taken from children and take action for this to be reconciled.
- Improve the range and breadth of activities for children.
- Ensure that children receive their full visit entitlement with their family and friends.
- Ensure that there is sufficient staffing on units and that rotas accurately reflect this so that staff can appropriately care for children and they are not left vulnerable.
- Ensure that all staff have the appropriate up-to-date mandatory training, including in safeguarding children.
- Improve the culture within Oakhill so that it is child centred, and so that staff understand clearly the professional behaviours that are expected, including keeping information confidential about other staff and children. This should extend to all professionals who visit or work with children in Oakhill.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the secure training centre since its last inspection.

The centre was inspected under the secure training centres inspection framework.

This inspection was carried out in accordance with Rule 43 of the Secure Training Centre Rules 1998 (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.

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Secure training centre details

Provider name: Oakhill Secure Training Centre

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Inspectors

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