



Sir Bob Neill MP
Chair, Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

17 June 2020

Dear Sir Bob,

SECURE SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

Thank you for your letter dated 4 June 2020 regarding our secure schools programme. It was unfortunate that my scheduled appearance before the Justice Select Committee on 2 June had to be cancelled, but I look forward to working with the Committee as you continue your inquiry into youth justice in England and Wales.

The Government is committed to secure schools and they represent our vision for the future of youth custody. As outlined in the 2016 Taylor Review, secure schools will reform youth custody by inviting innovative, child-focused providers to operate therapeutic facilities for vulnerable children. As you know, the Government announced Oasis Charitable Trust as the provider of the first secure school in 2019. We are delighted to be working with Oasis on this important project and are grateful for the enthusiasm and experience they have brought to the table thus far.

As to the delivery timeline, you are correct that we are now working towards opening the first secure school in 2022. Through secure schools, we are realising an unprecedented concept in this country – institutions dually registered as secure children’s homes and as 16-19 academies. We feel this structure best fulfils the secure schools vision of a secure environment centred on individualised education and care. That is why we intend the first secure school to be operated by a charitable academy trust, which, as you will realise, is another first for the youth custodial estate.

This novel approach requires that we work through some significant and complex legal and regulatory issues. We are working closely with the relevant regulatory bodies for academies, secure children’s homes and charities to resolve these issues in the interest of children and young people. Through continued constructive engagement with the relevant partners, we expect to open the first secure school at Medway in 2022. We are very grateful to colleagues across government and to Oasis for their continued cooperation and innovative thinking in this regard.

The Government remains committed to reforming the youth custodial estate and is dedicated to the secure schools programme, which we believe will deliver better outcomes for children and help reduce reoffending. I look forward to discussing this matter with you going forward, as we implement a more effective and child-friendly approach to youth custody.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Frazer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LUCY FRAZER QC MP