



Ministry
of Justice

Jake Richards MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

Andy Slaughter MP, Chair
Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: SUB 128250

17 October 2025

Dear Andy,

OASIS RESTORE SECURE SCHOOL (ORSS)

Thank you for your letter of 15 August regarding your concerns relating to the suspension of placements of children at Oasis Restore Secure School (ORSS). I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

I would like to reassure you that whilst our focus is the wellbeing of children and young people in custody to improve rehabilitation and reduce reoffending, I am deeply concerned with ensuring we get value for money.

Caring for children with complex needs in a secure setting is extremely challenging and the secure school model was new and innovative. Whilst it is inevitable that there would be learning to take, the issues experienced with the site in recent months are not an acceptable outcome for children or staff. For these reasons, the Department is working at pace to learn from these issues and rectify them as quickly as possible.

We remain committed to using this learning to deliver the best possible approach to supporting and rehabilitating the children in our care and to ensure this is done in an efficient manner for children, staff and the taxpayer.

***What are the safety concerns in relation to the internal doors and how have they arisen?
When were the safety concerns first identified and by whom?***

Oasis Restore raised concerns about internal door functionality in February 2025, when several incidences of vandalism exposed weaknesses in the locking systems and door fabric of some doors. ORSS have reported that the failure of the doors has hindered staff from effectively fulfilling their roles, and the concerns have resulted in increased risk to the safety of children and staff.

The doors referred to are **internal doors** connecting corridors, dining areas, kitchens, offices, visits rooms, education and storerooms. This kind of design can support free-flow movement and promote more of a home/school-like environment. Bedroom doors and doors which access external areas of the buildings are of a different specification and have not been damaged.

Who is undertaking the remedial work?

Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has commissioned appropriate providers to oversee and assure delivery. The design brief is currently being finalised and will inform the procurement process.

Specialist architects have identified the available replacement option, with site visits from suppliers underway to develop detailed specifications. The proposed solution has been successfully used in other secure settings, providing reassurance of their suitability.

What is the cost of replacing the doors and who is responsible for it?

The Department is currently reviewing costings and plans for replacement doors, as well as assessing liability for these. The current estimate is below.

The replacement of approximately 184 doors with a bespoke robust design is estimated to be £3 – 6 million. Costs are continuing to be refined as the project progresses, and we expect a final figure for these works by December,

Responsibility appears to rest with the MoJ, as the body accountable for the school's infrastructure. The current doors were installed correctly and in line with the agreed specification. However, the specification itself has since proven to be unsuitable for the operational demands of a secure setting. Under the terms of the Funding Agreement, the Secure Academy Trust is responsible only for routine and lifecycle maintenance. Where works are required beyond this to maintain Ofsted registration, the Trust may seek additional funding from the Secretary of State. If this is the case, liability remains with MoJ, as the issue stems from the original design specification rather than a failure of the Trust to maintain the site.

A proportion of the cost for these doors will be recovered from budget surplus arising from the temporary closure. I would be happy to provide further information to the Committee once these costs are confirmed in the coming months. In practice, this underspend will be used to fund whatever proportion of the cost of the doors that falls this financial year. An ongoing Independent Review has been initiated to re-visit the decision-making process around the original doors, and is continuing in the background whilst the ordering and installation of the new doors is prioritised.

What are the wider costs of closing ORSS for four months and moving children to other sites and who is responsible for those costs?

The Department is closely reviewing how to reduce operational costs during the period of closure and working closely with Oasis to ensure staff training and development are prioritised.

To ensure that the school remains operationally ready and able to reopen smoothly once placements resume, the MoJ may incur costs of up to £1 million per month to retain staffing, facilities, and essential services. The children are being accommodated within existing provision across the youth secure estate, so these relocation costs are absorbed within existing YCS budgets. Importantly, Oasis Restore is working closely with MoJ on proposals to mitigate costs.

These include staff and resources being used productively during the closure period as part of the improvement plan for this period, ensuring we learn from all lessons in the first months of the site's operation. Staff are undertaking training, placements at other sites and other activities to ensure that they are engaged throughout the closure period.

The improvement work is structured around core areas, identified in response to the recent Ofsted report, including child-facing practice development, behaviour management, safety and security, leadership development and operational processes. Every six weeks, staff from all disciplines will participate in structured placements, shadowing and learning from both community and custodial settings to strengthen practice and broaden perspectives.

How many children have had to be moved to other sites as a result of the safety concerns?

The YCS, NHS England and the MoJ worked closely with Oasis Restore Trust and Central and Northwest London NHS Trust (CNWL), to manage the safe transfer of children swiftly and sensitively. When the issue with the doors came to light, we worked to reduce the number of children at ORSS. There were ten children at ORSS when the closure was announced, eight children were moved into different establishments whilst two were released having served their sentence or the end of their period on remand.

What is the furthest distance that a child has had to be moved from ORSS?

The furthest distance a child has moved was from ORSS to HMP & YOI Parc.

Does the Ministry of Justice plan to report on the issue and set out the actions it plans to take to remedy the issue and by when?

I will keep you updated as the reassessment of the plans I have sought since my appointment have made some progress.

I appreciate your ongoing work with the department and look forward to continuing to work with you moving forward on this issue, and no doubt, many others.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jake Richards', with a stylized flourish at the end.

JAKE RICHARDS MP