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Chair, Justice Committee
House of Commons
London
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SECURE SCHOOLS - ANNOUNCEMENT OF FIRST SECURE SCHOOL OPERATOR

I am delighted to let you know that today we have announced Oasis Charitable Trust ('Oasis') as the successful applicant for running the first secure school in Medway.

Oasis has provided a clear, consistent and ambitious vision for the secure school throughout the selection process.

We know that children in custody display a wide range of complex needs, so it is crucial that we provide the right type of education, support and care to address those needs. Oasis has a proven track record of working well with children who display similar challenges. Three quarters of the schools that operate under Oasis' education arm; the Oasis Community Learning multi-academy trust, are within the bottom quartile of deprivation in the UK. The majority of these schools were rated by Ofsted as failing, with very challenging issues when Oasis became responsible for them. Over 80% of the schools are now rated as good or outstanding.

The organisation is based in the UK, and is one that has a Christian faith basis, however the activities that it runs, from education and healthcare to community housing projects are open to all. Oasis is responsible for 52 academies and 30,000 students, and is currently working with 1,000 vulnerable young adults each year. It has, as one of its core values, a desire to treat everyone equally and respect differences. The secure school, like the academies and other services that it runs, would be fully inclusive of all faiths and none. At interview, Oasis spoke about their engagement with an LGBT adviser to ensure that the secure school would be fully inclusive and have a potential positive impact on the protected characteristic of sexual orientation. In March, Oasis announced a partnership with Europe's leading LGBT rights charity, Stonewall, which will involve Stonewall offering Oasis staff specialist training on LGBT inclusion. Oasis also launched *Break the Cycle* in partnership with KPMG, a campaign which seeks to increase the number of BAME individuals in educational leadership positions, and raise the aspirations of BAME children in their care. Please visit <https://www.oasisuk.org/> for further information.

Alongside the autonomy necessary for Oasis to deliver services in an innovative way; which is a key part of the secure schools vision, they will also be subject to a high level of accountability to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission will jointly inspect secure schools, and

this will be supplemented by monthly independent visitor reviews and independent oversight from organisations such as the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

The secure school operator will be funded in line with the terms set out in a funding agreement, which we are expecting to agree in spring 2020. They must adhere to this agreement and to the Academies Financial Handbook. Academies are also subject to company law which requires that they have clear published frameworks for accountability, as well as being subject to a greater level of financial oversight.

I hope you will join us in welcoming Oasis as the successful applicant for the first secure school. We will now proceed to work alongside them throughout the pre-opening process, in order to ensure that they will be in a position to deliver the school in late 2020. This announcement represents a major step forward in our key youth custody initiative, and we hope that you will continue to support us as we work towards delivering the first secure school and improving the youth custody estate.

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

EDWARD ARGAR MP