

Director of Oberstown welcomes 'historic' announcement

On Thursday March 30, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone TD, announced that all young people under the age of 18 who are sentenced to detention by the courts will be sent to Oberstown rather than to an adult prison, with effect from March 31, 2017.

Pat Bergin, Director of Oberstown, welcomed the [announcement](#), saying that Oberstown has been preparing for this day for the past number of years.

"The Minister's decision to proceed with this order took into account a number of factors including the low numbers of young people on campus; the low numbers of 17-year-old boys placed in adult prison over the recent period, and the stability achieved on campus in recent months," Mr Bergin said.

Currently, there are 33 young people on the Oberstown campus, with 12 young people on detention orders aged 17-years-old and a further four young people aged 17 on remand.

"This highlights our current ability to provide safe and relevant care on campus," the Director added.

Mr Bergin acknowledged that while challenges were experienced in 2016, significant improvements had been made through capital expenditure on buildings and facilities on the campus. Work, he said, was ongoing to ensure that Oberstown achieves the highest level of safe and appropriate care and adheres to international standards and best practice.

The Director emphasized the contribution of staff over the past six months.

"This historic milestone in the reform of the youth justice system would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of all staff at Oberstown and we continue to strive to ensure that staff work in a safe environment. I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff once again for working to achieve this important policy measure, the final step in ending the detention of children in adult prisons."

ENDS