

Warren Hill provides a safe, stable and positive environment for the young people held there, said Anne Owers, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing her inspection report today. However, the establishment needed to increase the quantity and quality of purposeful activity for young people there.

The report also calls upon the Prison Service as a whole to review practices on strip-searching, segregation and adjudication to bring them in line with best practice in child protection.

Anne Owers said:

“The level of care for young people in the establishment was very high. The child protection procedures were a model for the rest of the juvenile estate and the training plan process was one of the best developed we had seen. However, the role of personal officers in training plans, and in interaction with young people on the residential units, had slipped noticeably since the last inspection, but still had a more active role than in most juvenile establishments.”

“The overall relationship between staff and young people was extremely good with a willingness among staff to put forward new ideas and take on new challenges. However, they did need to be more alert to the interaction between prisoners of different racial groups.”

The report also praises the Carlford Unit, whose staff continued to provide a very high level of care and positive interventions for serious long-term young offenders. It points out that the unit needs to be properly supported and resourced, both within the establishment and within the Prison Service, as it takes on a wider, and more demanding range of young prisoners.

The main criticisms focused on the lack of sufficient purposeful activity for the young people, which failed to meet the Youth Justice Board’s specifications. What existed during the day was good; there simply was not enough of it to occupy young people. Nor was there sufficient genuinely purposeful leisure activity for young people when they were out of their cells during evenings and weekends.

The report also voices concerns about the use of strip-searching, special cells and segregation, and the adjudication process throughout the juvenile estate. The Inspectorate does not believe that they are compatible with best practice in child protection and care, although this is an issue for the Prison Service’s Juvenile Group and the Youth Justice Board and not for Warren Hill alone.

Anne Owers concluded:

“Overall, the Governor and staff at Warren Hill are to be commended in providing a safe and positive environment for the young people there, at a time of considerable transition and change. With additional assistance, particularly more resources for education and activities, the establishment will be able to develop even further.”

Commenting on the report, Phil Wheatley, Director General of the Prison Service said:

“Staff at Warren Hill are charged with a particularly important task: to hold young people in a caring, challenging and constructive environment. I am delighted that their successes are acknowledged here, and their professionalism and commitment recognised.

“Young people at Warren Hill are now being given the tools, through educational qualifications and training opportunities, to help them successfully re-engage with society on their release.”

Notes to editors:

1. The full announced inspection of HMYOI Warren Hill was carried out between 11 - 15 November 2002.
2. HMPYOI Warren Hill is a young offender establishment housing up to 220 sentenced children and young people in two sites, Warren Hill and the Carlford Unit. The Carlford Unit houses young people serving section 53/91 sentences for more serious offences.
3. HM Prison Inspectorate reports are available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/prisons/inspprisons/inspection.html>