

# Schools aim to help



*IN the final day of our series on juvenile justice, Security Correspondent ANN MURPHY looks at the area of detention schools in Ireland.*

**MORE than one-tenth of the young people held in the country's four detention schools last year were from Cork.**

According to the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS), which has responsibility for the four Dublin schools, a total of 123 children were in detention last year. 16 of those were from Cork, accounting for 13% of the detainees. Dublin had the highest number, with 45. Limerick was third, with 15.

The IYJS is currently in the process of planning a new national child detention centre at Oberstown, which will accommodate all under-18s who have been ordered by the courts to be detained. This will mean that juveniles will no longer be held in St Patrick's Institution for Young Offenders.

A spokeswoman for the IYJS said: "The proposed development is currently at the design stage and it is anticipated that the tendering process for construction should take place in 2010, subject to Government approval and to the necessary funding being made available.

"It is envisaged that the construction should take place in phases, with the first phase expected to be completed in 2012."

She added: "The capacity of the new facility, when fully completed, is 167 places — an increase of 90 places over the current detention schools' capacity of 77 places."

Jesuit priest Fr Tony O'Riordan, a vocal opponent of the detention of children, believes the national centre planned for Oberstown is not ideal, given that it means that all detention for young offenders will be in the Dublin area.

There are no plans at present to develop a detention school outside of Dublin, but the possibility has not been ruled out.

The spokeswoman for the IYJS said: "The Expert Group on Children Detention Schools, which reported to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in December 2007, recommended that issue of providing a regional facility should be kept under review, having regard to future demands for such a facility."

Fr O'Riordan is also critical of the proposed size of the Oberstown centre, believing it will be too large to cater adequately for individual detainees.

He said: "The smaller the institution, the likelier it will be that it will be tailored to suit



**REHABILITATION:** Two children using the educational facilities in the Oberstown Detention Centre, Lusk, Co. Dublin, which provides a range of programmes designed to assist with rehabilitation and to address offending behaviour.

Picture: Bily Higgins

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**- Fr Tony O'Riordan, left, on the prospects of a new national child detention centre at Oberstown, Lusk, Co Dublin.**



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Under the Children Act 2001, the detention of children should only be used as a last resort.

Last week, there were 41 young people in the country's four detention schools, along with 63 under-18s in St Patrick's Institution.

A 99-point plan by the Government in response to the Ryan report on institutional abuse was published last week.

The plan said there had been a decrease in the number of children in detention in Ireland, partly because of the legislation and also because residential care for children in Ireland had become more specialised.

The document highlighted: "For example, the 1990s saw the establishment of high support and special care units for children who need specialist care."

The IYJS spokeswoman said the principal objective of detention under the Children Act was the rehabilitation of the young offender.

She added: "Each detention school provides a range of programmes designed to assist with the child's rehabilitation and to address their offending behaviour."

"In addition, each child is provided with a range of recreational activities including arts and crafts, horticulture, football, basketball and tennis."

And she said: "Each children's detention school has an education centre which, during the normal school year, provides education courses, including Junior and Leaving Certificate, as well as those leading to FETAC accredited awards."

"Teaching staff for the education centres are provided by the City and County of Dublin Vocational Educational Committees."

In unveiling the Government's action plan

in response to the Ryan report last week, Minister for Children Barry Andrews said: "I am determined that children in care today and other vulnerable children will be protected from neglect and abuse with all of the resolve of the State."

He said that compliance with the Children First guidelines for the protection and welfare of children would be put on a statutory footing ensure that safety of youngsters.

And he said that residential centres for children would now be subject to independent inspection.

He said: "There has been criticism that some facilities in which children in the care of the State reside are not independently inspected."

"Recognising this gap, it is the Government's intention that, by 2010, all children's residential centres, including those for children with a disability and separated children seeking asylum, will be independently inspected by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)."

He added: "In the course of drafting this plan, I met with the leading UK child protection expert, Lord Laming, a former Chief Inspector of the Social Services Inspectorate."

"He stressed that inspections are only valuable if recommendations are implemented. The requirement that all care centres be registered will ensure that recommendations are followed up; otherwise, services will not be allowed to operate."



**AMONG the proposals announced last week by the Minister for Children, Barry Andrews, pictured left, in response to the Ryan report:**

- A national memorial, to act as a reminder of the neglect and abuse of victims, as well as consideration of a 'national date

- of atonement'.
- The Health Service Executive (HSE) will build on the out-of-hours crisis intervention service in place with GPs, acute hospitals and mental health services and pilot it in two areas. Results of that pilot, and a pilot out-of-hours 'place of

- safety' service, for children deemed at risk by gardaí under the Childcare Act, will shape the future direction in the area. The 'place of safety' strand was announced after the release of the Monageer Report in May this year.
- Limited caseloads for newly

- qualified social workers, as well as moves to fill 270 vacant social work posts.
- Appointment of a senior manager in the HSE, with sole responsibility for children and family social services, to provide leadership and focus around the delivery of services.

## Recommendations for changes in



# kids to reform

## Four detention schools for our troubled children

THERE are four child detention schools in Ireland at present.

All four are based in Dublin — three at Oberstown in Lusk. The four are:

- Trinity House School — operational capacity of 17 in December 2008. Boys aged between 10 and 16 years are detained there. It opened in 1973 and will continue

to operate as part of the new national detention school when it is opened. Work is progressing on modernising the facility, with a budget of €3 million.

- Oberstown Boys School — operational capacity of 20 in December 2008. Boys aged between 10 and 16 are detained there.
- Oberstown Girls School — operational

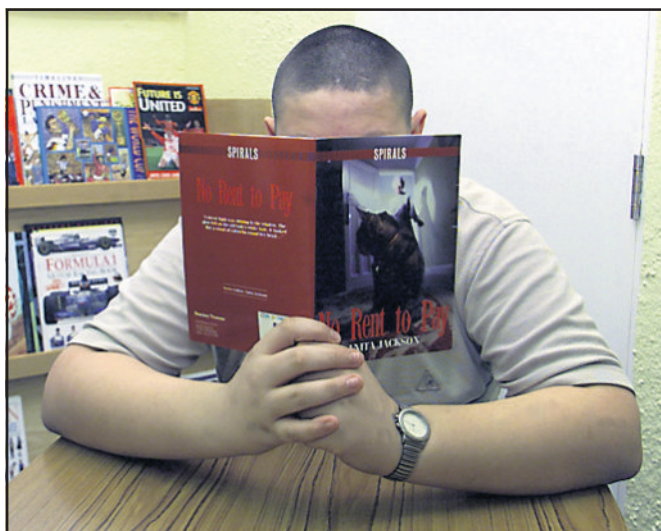
capacity of eight in December 2008. It holds girls aged up to 18 years. From March 1, 2007, girls under 18 must not be held in adult prisons.

- Finglas Child and Adolescent Centre, Dublin 11 — operational capacity of 16 in December 2008 and caters for males aged between 10 and 16 years.



The child detention centre at Oberstown, above, actually houses three of the country's four detention schools. Each school has an education centre, right, which provides education courses including Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Picture: Billy Higgins



## 123 young people detained in 2008

THERE were 123 young people ordered to be detained by the four detention schools by the courts in 2008.

- 94 were male and 29 were female.
- 16 were from Cork city and county.

They were either sent on remand (awaiting a court finding), to be assessed or were detained after a court finding.

- 111 were held on

remand, awaiting a court finding on guilt.

- 44 were given detention orders, after being found guilty. They were ordered to be detained in a child detention school.
- The average length of sentence was 10 months, with the shortest being one month. The longest was 30 months.

The orders were made under the Children Act 2001.

# child care fuelled by abuse report

- Independent inspections of all residential facilities for children, including young people with disabilities and separated children seeking asylum.
- Access to aftercare for young people leaving the care system, until the age of 21.

The HSE will conduct a longitudinal study to follow young people who leave care and map their transition to adulthood.

- Improved access to counselling for survivors of abuse.
- Certificates for victims of

abuse, clarifying whether they have a criminal record or not. Many abuse survivors had concerns that they had criminal records because of being sent to industrial schools when they were children.

- Requiring State employees, as well as staff in services funded

by the State, to implement the Children First guidelines on reporting child protection concerns.

Children First is a set of national guidelines, which were initially published a decade ago, for identifying and reporting child abuse.

## News in brief



## Gas price cut welcomed

CORK South Central Fianna Fáil TD Michael McGrath has welcomed the news that Cork households and businesses are likely to benefit from a cut in their gas bills over the next few months. Deputy McGrath, above, was responding to news that Bord Gáis had sought permission from the energy regulator to reduce prices by 9.3% for residential customers and 13.6% for small and medium businesses from October 1.

"The proposed reduction in gas prices will have a discernible impact on household gas bills throughout Cork," the deputy said.

## Dunmanway café

KITCHEN equipment is being sought for a new youth café due to open in Dunmanway next month. The Dunmanway Youth Development Group is seeking donations of glasses and plates for the bar area of the youth café. Items can be dropped into the Dunmanway Family Resource Centre on Tuesday, from 10am to 4.30pm.

## Allihies festival

FOR the 99th consecutive year, people from all over the country are expected to descend on Allihies this weekend for the village's annual festival.

The festival kicks off tomorrow, and includes silage bale rolling, soccer and basketball events. All proceeds from the week's activities will go towards the cost of refurbishing the community hall.

## Coffee morning

THE annual Baltimore Tidy Towns fund-raising coffee morning will take place next week.

The event will be held on Tuesday at 11am in the Baltimore Sailing Club. There will be a huge number of raffle prizes and entertainment for children. The winners of a photography competition will be announced and the photos will be on display in the club.

## Glandore school

A FUND-RAISING Eighties night in aid of Glandore National School will be held this weekend.

The parents' association of the school has organised the disco night in the Marine Hotel with all proceeds going to school projects. Entry costs €10 and the disco gets under way at 9.30pm. Tickets are available from 087-4159131.