

# The Five Islands School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133554
<b>Local Authority</b>	Isles of Scilly
<b>Inspection number</b>	294096
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Pauline Robins HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Middle deemed primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	277
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tim Guthrie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Penman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 April 2005
<b>School address</b>	Secondary base Carn Thomas St Mary's TR21 0LB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01720 422929
<b>Fax number</b>	01720 422969

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<b>Age group</b>	4–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The Five Islands School is a federation of the four former primary schools and one secondary school serving the unique community of the Isles of Scilly. The school is effectively a split site school with its five bases separated by land and sea. Weekly boarding provision, at Mundesley House on St Mary's, is available to 15 secondary- aged pupils from the off-islands. Thirteen per cent of the pupils are recognised as having learning difficulties or disabilities, including five pupils who have a formal statement of Special Educational Need. There are three pupils who speak English as an additional language.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The Five Islands is an outstanding school and the children and young people educated there are a credit to this unique island community. Since the last inspection, which removed the school from the category of special measures, there has been a well considered programme of development which has brought about sustainable improvement. The headteacher and his leadership and management team provide the school with outstanding capacity to improve further. The school is overly cautious in judging its performance as good. However, accurate and robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school confirm the inspectors' findings that the school is outstanding.

Outstanding relationships are the key to the success of this school and are evident in all its work. As a result, the pupils are confident, motivated and enjoy all aspects of their learning; whether that be in the classroom, during the many extra-curricular activities or when resident in the boarding provision. Staff give freely of their time over and above what would normally be found in school. The curriculum is greatly enriched by this dedication which provides opportunities for pupils to take additional GCSE subjects and study diverse subjects such as archaeology and marine biology as part of the enrichment programme.

Pupils enter the Reception class with standards that are at the national average, except in their personal, social and emotional development (PSED), where they are slightly below. In Key Stage 1, pupils make excellent progress to reach standards which are above national expectation in all areas, including PSED. Standards and achievement at Key Stage 2 are currently satisfactory, but there is a recognition that this is largely due to historical staffing turbulence and data show that this will improve to match the high standards at other key stages by 2008. At Key Stages 3 and 4, the progress pupils make and the standards they attain are outstanding, particularly at GCSE where, for a number of years, they have been one of the top performing schools nationally. This is the result of excellent teaching which is innovative and excites the pupils to want to learn. The understanding that pupils have of their levels of attainment, targets and the means by which they can bring about improvement to their work is exceptional.

The process to become a truly federated school has taken time to become embedded in daily practice. It creates many challenges but also affords the school many opportunities. The weekly federated activities involving primary age pupils are an example of outstanding practice, providing opportunities to develop pupils' social skills and smoothing the transition to the secondary phase. The curriculum is broadened through the teaching of French to even the youngest pupils and by taking advantage of the local environment and location. Secondary-aged pupils benefit from the Leading Edge initiative which links the Five Islands to a school in Cornwall and through the vocational opportunities provided by Cornwall College.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

### Grade: 1

The boarding provision was last inspected in October 2005 when the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) found that all standards were met or exceeded bar that relating to the monitoring of records. Outcomes of the inspection showed that a lot of positive work had been undertaken since the previous inspection and that the welfare of those pupils using the boarding house is well provided for. The headteacher has previous boarding experience and without doubt this has brought about further improvement, and areas for development noted in the

last inspection have been addressed. There are very good links made between the work of the school and the support offered by the residential care staff.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- This is an outstanding school and there are no significant areas for improvement. However, inadequacies in the accommodation at the Carn Thomas base have the potential to constrain innovative curriculum development.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' achievement and standards from the Reception Year through to GCSE are outstanding, except at the end of Key Stage 2, where data indicate much improvement from 2008 onwards. When they start in the Reception Year, most pupils have reached standards which are similar to those found nationally. They make excellent progress and by the end of their first year are above national averages, and especially so in mathematical development. Excellent progress is maintained through Key Stage 1 and outcomes are high in the national assessments. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards and progress are currently satisfactory. This is partly a reflection of the school's chequered history and has now been addressed. Through Key Stage 3 and 4, the pupils maintain excellent progress and the outcomes at GCSE are well above the national picture. In information and communication technology (ICT), physical education (PE) and religious education (RE) outcomes have been variable and not as high as in other subjects. There is also some variation in the performance of girls and boys, with girls often doing better than the boys by more than the national difference; this is also true at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities do as well as other pupils. The targets set for pupils are challenging and the school is constantly reviewing its expectations of achievement.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils are exceptionally mature, confident and considerate of each other. This is evident in the way they discuss and evaluate their work; giving and receiving positive criticism which enables them to develop their thinking and take responsibility for their own learning. They work well on their own, including the younger ones, and stay on task without supervision. Pupils from the secondary base support the learning of much younger pupils and the Year 6 ICT leaders take seriously their coaching responsibility. The pupils enjoy coming to school and value the stimulating curriculum, high quality of teaching and the amount of additional time staff give to running extra activities. As one pupil told the inspection team, 'On Sunday evening I really look forward to school the next day.' There is little bullying and if pupils have any concerns they know who to talk to and are confident that any issues are effectively dealt with.

Pupils play an active role in the development of the school through the democratically elected school council. They feel that their opinions are listened to and they have influenced changes in healthy eating. Younger pupils are rewarded for eating fruit and vegetables and the popular school lunches use locally sourced produce. By the time they leave school, pupils are well equipped to follow programmes of further education on the mainland or enter into the world of work. Their literacy and numeracy levels are high but they also demonstrate exceptional basic and social skills.

The school has been proactive in improving attendance. They adhere rigorously to their attendance policy and have changed the autumn half term to respond to local need so that parents can take their children away for two weeks.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent and enables pupils of all abilities and all ages to achieve exceptionally well. Rigorous and regular checking of the quality of teaching and pupils' work has led to significant improvements since the previous inspection. The outstandingly good relationships between staff and pupils contribute to the excellent learning environment which exists throughout the school.

Staff are enthusiastic about their teaching and innovative in the methods they use. As a result, pupils are motivated and eager to learn. Very good use is made of secondary specialist staff to provide expertise within the primary phase, particularly in subjects such as music and physical education. Staff are very aware of pupils' preferred learning styles and encourage the pupils to adopt the most appropriate strategies to help them learn. The favourable ratio of teachers to pupils, particularly on the island bases and in some of the classes in Key Stage 4, enables teachers to know their pupils really well, to give them a high degree of personal attention and to tailor work to their individual needs. Assistants and other adult helpers work closely with the teaching staff to plan lessons and assess pupils; they also provide excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils' work is marked regularly and thoroughly, giving pupils a clear understanding of what they have done well and what they need to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The school provides an excellent curriculum for pupils from the time they start in the Foundation Stage through to when they take their GCSEs in Year 11. Joint ventures undertaken as a result of the federation provide a cornerstone for a wide range of stimulating and exciting activities for pupils in the primary phase. The richness of these activities and the expertise offered by secondary specialist staff provide great depth to the curriculum.

There is very good emphasis on developing key literacy and numeracy skills through all subjects. The range of options available at GCSE is exceptionally broad for such a small school. It now includes a number of vocational courses and a range of subjects which pupils can take after normal school hours; some of them studied together with adults, which also contributes further to pupils' personal development. The federated enrichment programme for secondary pupils allows for increased academic challenge for the more able and a broader range of options for all pupils. Through these activities, great prominence is given to developing and assessing the six nationally recognised key skills.

The school provides numerous clubs and out-of-school activities, which have a high take-up rate from the great majority of pupils. A productive partnership with a school in Cornwall involving such things as joint musical productions and sports opportunities, and a range of visits and activities on the mainland and further afield, such as theatre visits and the Pyrenean challenge, add further enrichment to the school's curriculum.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

Without doubt, staff care deeply about the children and young people. They know them well and their concern for their future success mean that pupils feel valued and confident. Given the context of this island community, careful attention is paid to health and safety issues. The federated activities and well planned transition arrangements ensure that pupils move between key stages with the minimum of disruption. This is particularly successful given that for some pupils this means making a transition to weekly boarding when they reach secondary age.

Throughout the secondary base, pupils' work is marked carefully and clear guidance is given for improvement. Targets are reviewed regularly and work is planned to ensure that good progress can be made. This process is developing well in the primary bases and teachers of the younger pupils keep frequent and accurate records of progress. The school's procedure for monitoring the progress of pupils is outstanding. In the secondary base, pupils are very much involved in understanding their targets and how to achieve them. They are reflective of their own performance and receive good guidance in making accurate assessments of progress. Pupils in the primary bases are learning how to recognise progress and to comment sensibly on their achievement.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The headteacher facilitates and puts in place plans which give his staff the opportunity to take action and flourish. He has the vision and determination to bring about change. He is well supported by a senior leadership team (SLT) which has complementary skills and works well together. Although standards are high, the SLT is not complacent and is constantly monitoring and evaluating to find ways to improve the quality of learning for pupils. As a result, it has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and appropriate plans are in place to bring about change. There are long-term plans to support the viability and financial security of the school which build on current successes and celebrate the uniqueness of the location.

A recent restructure has given staff a clear understanding of their roles. They feel empowered to take responsibility for their subjects or key stages with a view to raising standards still further and ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met. The staff has a common purpose and morale is high. The appointment of the leader of learning post is significant in raising the profile of assessment and developing an approach to teaching which acknowledges pupils' preferred styles of learning.

The federation of the school has become a reality. This was summed up by one member of staff who said, " We are no longer the Five Islands separate schools but one school for the Isles of Scilly."

Governors are very supportive, particularly the chair, who gives freely of his time. Governors feel that the headteacher keeps them well informed through reports yet they also know the challenging questions which need to be asked in order to hold the school fully to account. Both the chair of governors and vice chair meet with the headteacher on a weekly basis as part of their monitoring procedures.

Cambridge Education has provided exceptional support to the school. The senior personnel and consultants act as a catalyst to bring about change and enable the staff to make links and keep abreast of educational innovation and practice. They also act in place of the local authority to undertake the challenging discussions which ensure that the school is on track to meet exacting targets.

Currently, the secondary base is not fit for purpose. Much has been done to broaden and enrich the curriculum but, without adequate facilities, the scope for further development in a number of areas is limited.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of the Five Islands School, Isles of Scilly TR21 0LB

On behalf of the inspection team and myself, I would like to express our thanks and say what a pleasure it was to visit your school. As you told us, and we agree, the Five Islands School is outstanding.

The thing that makes the school so special is the excellent relationships between you and the staff and the way you get along so well with each other. You are very confident, polite and thoughtful young people.

We were especially impressed by the way you all know your levels, targets and what you need to do to improve. The school council explained that teachers make learning fun and, because they know the way in which each of you learn, they teach in a way that helps you all to do your best. As a result, the standard of your work and the progress you make is outstanding.

The curriculum is very varied and gives you the opportunity to do some really interesting things, like archaeology and marine biology at Carn Thomas and the federated days at the primary bases. You appreciate the hard work that the staff put in to help you, particularly running after school activities and classes.

The senior staff are doing everything they can to make sure that, even though Five Islands is an outstanding school, it continues to improve and do well. I know that you will support them in this.

We have left the school with only one area for improvement which I know everyone is well aware of:

- At the present time, the school buildings, particularly at Carn Thomas, are not good enough. This makes it difficult for the staff to make improvements to the curriculum in areas such as ICT, music and PE.

This letter is only a summary. I am sure that those of you at the secondary base will want to read the report in full.

With all best wishes for your future success and that of the school.

Pauline Robins HMI