

Inspection of The Five Islands Academy

Church Road, Old Town, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0NA

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Rachel Gibb. This school is part of Leading Edge Academies Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kelley Butcher, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jackie Eason MBE.

What is it like to attend this school?

Five Islands Academy is an inclusive, all-through school for pupils living on the Isles of Scilly. Most pupils attend school on the largest island, St Mary's. Primary-age pupils living on the islands of Tresco, Bryher, St Martins and St Agnes attend one of three 'off island' bases. From the age of 11, these pupils enjoy boarding at Mundesley House on St Mary's. This gives them access to subject-specialist teaching and resources ready for the secondary phase.

The school provides a remarkable range of cultural experiences for pupils, especially within the arts. An impressive range of expert practitioners are brought to the islands to work creatively with pupils. Pupils are inspired to take the initiative with local projects of their own. For example, after securing National Lottery funding, Year 11 pupils are leading the redevelopment of the Isles of Scilly Museum.

Pupils develop a powerful sense of community. Every effort is made to bring pupils from the different islands together. On Fridays, pupils come together as one school for a day of learning on St Mary's. The culture of the school is such that everyone works together to find solutions and resolve issues. Pupils regularly engage in constructive discussions. They feel safe to air any worries or fears during 'circle time', or to raise these privately with trusted staff.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's curriculum is designed to build logically from Reception through to the end of Year 11. The school emphasises concepts that continue to be important in subject learning as pupils move through the school. For example, in English, pupils are taught to consciously craft their writing and speaking in more complex ways as they grow older. Year on year, the curriculum helps pupils to gain the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.

Children joining the Reception Year start learning to read immediately. They enjoy learning phonics and join in energetically. Teachers pause throughout the school day to share books with their classes. This continues throughout the primary phase. Classrooms are deliberately stocked with motivating reading materials, which pupils are keen to borrow. By the time that pupils reach key stage 2, they are in the habit of reading regularly.

Pupils follow a broad curriculum. The curriculum expands their horizons and helps them to keep their options open. At 16, most pupils continue their education on the mainland. The school sets pupils on ambitious career pathways, building on interests shaped by the local environment and industries, such as engineering. Many study GCSEs in separate sciences, design and technology, and/or engineering with this aim. Prestigious employers, such as the Royal Navy, support pupils to develop their interview skills.

The school aims for pupils to have enough knowledge of each subject to really know what it means to be, for example, a historian. However, some pupils do not reach this degree of confidence because teaching does not take enough account of their needs. For example, some pupils are held back by insecure literacy or numeracy skills. This makes it hard for them to learn new material unless the teaching is adapted with them in mind.

Gaps in pupils' knowledge have limited their progress during key stage 2. The COVID-19 pandemic, combined with frequent movement of families on and off the Isles of Scilly, means that some pupils have missed essential learning. The school is addressing this by using assessment to identify the right type of support for pupils. Phonics teaching continues for as long as pupils need it. Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are often well-understood by staff, who provide individualised support.

Children in the early years foundation stage are explicitly taught the behaviours they need to learn well, such as listening attentively. Staff continue to reinforce high expectations for pupils' behaviour throughout the school. Lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, attend school well overall. When pupils struggle to attend, the school listens and adapts. This helps those pupils to build back up to regular attendance over time.

Pupils are accepting of others and those from different backgrounds. For example, pupils fundraise and have set up a charity to support refugees. The school insists upon a positive culture in which any intolerance is challenged. As a result, pupils have strong knowledge of how the law protects people with different characteristics. The curriculum for relationships and sex education and health education regularly circles back to important principles, such as consent. All of this makes for mature, well-prepared young people.

The trust supports the school to overcome the challenges arising from the unique island setting. For example, the trust helps staff to secure accommodation on the islands. Boating between the isles is regularly affected by inclement weather and the tides. At times, this disrupts the life of the school, causing frustration for pupils, parents, and staff. The school has well-established contingency plans. For example, the school issues pupils with tablet devices through which they can access the full curriculum remotely.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching is not adapted consistently in the light of potential barriers to pupils' learning. Pupils with insecure basic skills, such as those who lack fluency in

reading and arithmetic, struggle to keep up with their peers when learning new content. The trust should ensure that the school helps teachers to identify pupils who are likely to require new content further broken down.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	144638
Social care unique reference number	SC042065
Local authority	Isles of Scilly
Inspection number	10257086
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Number of boarders on roll	20
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jackie Eason MBE
Headteacher	Rachel Gibb
Website	www.fiveislands.scilly.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Five Islands Academy is an all-through school for pupils aged four to 16. It comprises four sites, the largest of which is on the island of St Mary's. Primary-aged pupils living on the 'off islands' are taught at one of three sites, located on Tresco, St Martin's or St Agnes. Pupils living on Bryher travel by boat to Tresco daily.
- At age 11, pupils living on the 'off islands' board on St Mary's. They complete the secondary phase of their education at the largest of the school sites, returning home to their families for weekends and holidays. At the time of the inspection, there were 20 pupils boarding at Mundesley House. The boarding provision is run by the school.
- This is a Church of England school and part of the Diocese of Truro. The school's provision for religious education and collective worship was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in July 2023.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider, which is commissioned by the local authority.
- Five Islands Academy converted to become an academy in December 2018. When its predecessor school, Five Islands School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall. The school is part of the Leading Edge Academies Partnership. This multi-academy trust includes three secondary and three primary schools.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the boarding provision.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the chief executive officer, the chair of the multi-academy trust, and the chair and two members of the local academy committee. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the Diocese of Truro on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors visited and spoke with pupils and staff at each of the school's four sites.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also took into account responses to surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

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