

Five Islands School Boarding House St Mary's

Council of the Isles of Scilly

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

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

The Five Islands Academy has one boarding house which can accommodate up to 32 children. Children who are of secondary-school age and who do not live on the main island are generally required to board Monday to Friday during term time. There were 20 children boarding at the time of this inspection. The headteacher is also the head of boarding.

This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the school's education provision. The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 October 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 24 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Boarders enjoy the opportunities provided by staying in the boarding house. This includes spending time with friends and joining clubs. They say they would recommend it to others. Boarders are able to take part in a wide range of activities. House parents support them to make the most of outdoor activities such as kayaking, rock climbing and going to the skatepark. In the boarding house, boarders enjoy painting, crafts, baking and murder mystery evenings. One of the highlights for boarders is the annual sleep-out in December, which raises money for charity. These activities benefit boarders and enhance their social development.

The boarding house is a warm and welcoming environment. Boarders say they are comfortable in the house. They enjoy eating meals together, where they talk about their day. Boarders are particularly pleased with the renovated shower facilities, which now give them more privacy.

Boarders are well prepared for their move into the boarding house. They regularly visit from an early age, knowing this is where they will move to. At the end of Year 6, they have an overnight stay to get used to the house and their rooms. One boarder said the transition was 'honest' and that staff showed boarding how it really is.

Boarders have the opportunity to develop independence and life skills in a safe and structured way. Boarders come from smaller, more rural islands. Boarding offers a stepping stone before many move to post-16 provision in larger towns and cities on the mainland. As such, they get used to busier roads, more people and larger shops. Boarders successfully move on to post-16 provision, and by this stage are well prepared for living away from home.

Boarding staff work in partnership with school staff to ensure they understand boarders needs and provide the appropriate support to help boarders to attend school and achieve their individual goals. Boarding staff support boarders with homework and encourage activities that complement their learning and development.

Boarders have healthy meals prepared by the school. Most boarders enjoy these meals, however some do not. Leaders seek feedback and review the meals provided. House parents ensure boarders have access to alternatives, but also encourage them to try a variety of food.

Feedback from parents is mixed. Most parents say that they can contact house parents if they need to. However, some parents feel there is a lack of structure to time in boarding and that some boarders are bullied. The mixed feedback contrasts with the views of boarders themselves, who are mostly very positive about their experiences.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Boarders feel safe living in the boarding house. They get on well with house parents, which leads to them forming trusting relationships. Boarders understand and respect the expectations of them, which means they come in on time and follow the rules of the house.

House parents recognise the uniqueness of the setting and the very real impact of homesickness on boarders. Boarders feel able to say when they feel upset or worried. House parents offer chats before bedtime to talk through any of the day's worries. They make effective use of the records management system to pass on concerns to colleagues in school. This helps to provide consistent support for boarders across all settings and throughout their day.

Boarders say there are no current concerns with bullying, and that any issues in the past have been quickly dealt with. House parents identify boarders who need additional support with their emotional health, including those who self-harm. They work closely with families and ensure boarders have appropriate support in place. While support for emotional health is strong, older boarders do not all know where to access support for sexual health and relationship advice.

Leaders recognise the risks associated with operating in a small community. Clear processes are in place to overcome potential issues that result from the interconnections between families, boarders and staff.

Boarders understand how to be safe, such as only swimming in the sea when a lifeguard is present. The physical environment is monitored for safety. Fire drills take place regularly. Boarders enjoy participating in an annual event with the local fire service, when they are able to develop a practical understanding of risks in the house.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Creative and dynamic house parents support boarders. The consistency and stability provided has supported leaders to improve the provision since the last inspection. Assistant house parents are additional trusted adults for boarders. House parents feel supported in their role and demonstrate commitment to the boarders.

Regular meetings take place between house parents and senior leaders. These meetings explore safeguarding concerns in the home and support needs for specific boarders, as well as allowing for general oversight of the provision. There is effective joint working and communication between house parents, which shows that they understand each other and work well together. However, while practice seen is positive, it is not yet supported by regular, effective supervision. House parents receive training related to their role. However, records do not always reflect the training and informal learning opportunities staff receive.

Leaders receive support from the trust and governors to monitor the boarding provision. Through this monitoring, they identify areas for improvement in the house and understand the quality of the provision. Regular boarding meetings provide the opportunity for boarders to provide feedback about their experiences, and changes are made as a result. Leaders identify and understand that improvements are required to the boarding house as a result of the age of the property. There are clear plans in place to further improve the physical environment.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure boarders know how to access relationship and sexual health support and advice.
- School leaders should ensure all staff receive regular, effective supervision, focused on boarders' needs, and that this is recorded effectively. School leaders should also ensure relevant training is recorded.
- School leaders should ensure they support parents to understand boarders' experiences.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC042065

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Rachel Gibb

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspector

Clare Nixon, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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