



Inspection report

# The Five Islands School

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 133554  
LEA Isles of Scilly

Inspection number 274736  
Inspection dates 25 to 28 April 2005  
Reporting inspector Mr A Watters HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of School	Federation	School address	Carn Thomas
School category	Voluntary Controlled		St Mary's
	<i>Diocese of Truro</i>		Isles of Scilly
Age range of pupils	5 to 16 years		TR21 0JY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01720 422929
Number on roll	249	Fax number	01720 422969
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr T Guthrie
Date of previous inspection	June and July 2003	Headteacher	Mr J Evans

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Age group	Published	Reference no.
5 to 16 years	3 July 2005	274736

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## Introduction

When The Five Islands School was inspected in June and July 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in April 2005.

### Description of the school

The Five Islands School is situated in the Isles of Scilly. It is a unique school serving a unique community; it opened on 1 April 2002 following the closure of the five separate schools on the islands and after the Carn Thomas base and the Carn Gwaval base were inspected and designated as schools causing concern. The process of closure and reopening as a single federated institution was funded under the government's fresh start initiative. There are four primary bases for pupils aged between 5 and 11 years; Carn Gwaval on St Mary's is the largest with 116 pupils on roll. The base on Tresco has 16 pupils on roll and St Martin's and St Agnes have 13 and two pupils on roll respectively. The Carn Thomas secondary base for pupils aged between 11 and 16 years is located on St Mary's and has 102 pupils. Eighteen per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, including six pupils who have a formal Statement of Special Educational Need. A very small proportion of pupils, 1.6 per cent, are entitled to free school meals.

In the autumn term 2003 a school improvement partnership board was established by the Department for Education and Skills to monitor the school's progress. On 14 October 2004, and following an inspection of the Isles of Scilly local education authority (LEA), Cambridge Education signed a contract with the Isles of Scilly Council to provide many of the education services on the islands.

The substantive headteacher resigned and left in June 2003. An interim headteacher joined shortly afterwards; his contract initially ran until the end of the summer term 2004 but was subsequently extended until 31 August 2005. During 2004 there was a significant and considerable turnover of teaching staff which affected the provision in each base; since September 2004, when seven teachers joined the school, the staffing situation has become stable. In March 2005 the governors successfully recruited a substantive headteacher to lead and manage the school from September 2005.

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## Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

The Five Islands School has improved considerably; it is a very good school with many strong features. Nearly all the pupils make good progress and many reach high levels of achievement. The pupils relate very well to each other, respect staff, have positive attitudes and behave extremely well. Much of the teaching is very good and some is of a very high quality. The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets the needs of most pupils and is increasingly reflecting the unique opportunities offered by life in an island community. The quality of leadership, management and governance is very good. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership and receives very good support from the senior management team. The increasingly influential role of subject departments involving teachers from all bases is a very positive development. The aims of the federation are met well; the school is an inclusive and welcoming community where staff and pupils work very hard, their morale is high and there is a buoyant confidence about the future.

### Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of June and July 2003 required the school to address key issues concerned with eliminating underachievement, improving the quality of teaching, establishing effective leadership at all levels and ensuring that the aims of the federation are met. There has been good progress on all key issues.

### Capacity to improve

Strategic planning is secure; it is satisfactory overall with some good features and the school is well placed to improve further. The recent involvement of Cambridge Education has proved pivotal in establishing a rational and coherent development plan which takes account of the uniqueness of the islands and the pressing desire of all partners to provide a thriving and successful school that is an integral part of the island community. While a budget settlement has been agreed recently and there is optimism about future funding arrangements, based on more secure financial planning, there is still uncertainty surrounding the school's longer-term financial viability. Similarly, the provision of affordable good quality homes for key workers on the islands, including teachers, continues to be an essential, but problematic, element of the school's capacity to recruit and retain staff of high quality. All partners recognise that these are fundamental priorities for the school's medium and long-term plans and rightly underpin a formal review of the curriculum which has begun recently. There is a rigorous and systematic approach to monitoring the school's performance and a clear sense of educational direction and teamwork; most senior teachers and subject leaders are making a strong and positive contribution to raising standards, which is reflected by an upward trend in the pupils' performance. The school's management is secure and there is a strong drive to eliminate underachievement at all levels.

## What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- ensure that all pupils make good or better progress and achieve well, based on their prior attainment;
- strengthen strategic planning, particularly in relation to: securing the school's long-term financial viability; establishing affordable homes for teachers and implementing the proposed new curriculum;

## Achievement and standards

Standards are high and rising. The pupils' results in the 2004 National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations were well above average compared to other maintained schools. At Key Stages 1 and 2, nearly all of the pupils achieved or exceeded the levels expected for their age, although in English the results were better in reading than they were in writing. Similarly, at Key Stage 3 most of the pupils achieved or exceeded the expected levels in English, mathematics, and science. At GCSE, 93 per cent of the pupils achieved five or more A\* to C grades, with 22 per cent achieving A or A\* grades. These results were among the highest nationally.

The pupils' achievement is good and the most able pupils are making much better progress than they were at the time of the previous inspection. At each key stage, the pupils make good progress overall although there is some variation in their performance, including between the primary bases and between subjects at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. Very good teaching is helping the pupils to make rapid progress and is playing a major role in eliminating underachievement. Systems for identifying and tracking the progress of the few remaining underachieving pupils are effective. In lessons, standards were usually above or well above average.

## Personal development

There has been a significant and positive change in the pupils' behaviour and attitudes; these are now very good and a strength of the school. The provision for the pupils' personal development is very good. The majority of the pupils are highly motivated and show real enthusiasm for their learning. They are mature, polite and many display a confidence beyond their years. A relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere gives rise to a positive learning ethos which permeates the school. The relationships between pupils and adults are good and based on mutual respect and a high level of care. The pupils enjoy coming to school and support each other well.

Attendance has remained relatively static in recent years. At 93 per cent in the primary bases, it is below the national average for primary schools, which is 94.2 per cent. The pupils' attendance in Key Stages 3 and 4 is 93.7 per cent which is above the national average for secondary schools. This gives a satisfactory picture overall.

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A number of opportunities are provided for the pupils to take responsibility within the school; for example, the playground friends' initiative at Carn Gwaval and the school council. The pupils are vociferous in their support of the school and are keen to take an active part in making decisions about the school's future. Assemblies made a very positive contribution to the pupils' personal development, effectively reinforcing the strong sense of family, community and celebration. There are a number of extracurricular activities; these range from sports clubs, music groups, and subject classes to the more specialist lace-making and gardening clubs. Some of the pupils are talented musicians and perform at a very high standard. In addition, the use of visitors to provide workshops on topics such as Indian and African music enables the pupils to experience and appreciate diverse cultures.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is very good overall and was unsatisfactory in only one lesson; in 79 per cent of lessons the teaching was good or better. In a third of the lessons the teaching was very good and in one lesson it was excellent. Much of the teaching was of a high quality and this is a strength of the school. Nearly all teachers are benefiting from the clear and unequivocal advice and direction provided by the school's leadership team and their own strong commitment and enthusiasm for providing a high quality of education to all pupils.

In the lesson which was excellent, the pupils achieved very high standards because the teaching was inspirational. The many features of good and very good teaching in other lessons included: teachers' excellent subject knowledge and their high expectations; tasks that challenged and motivated the pupils to achieve highly; stimulating questions that required the pupils to work hard; lively, enthusiastic and humorous presentations that engaged the pupils in high quality learning experiences; and good quality planning that ensured all pupils knew exactly what they were required to learn by the end of a lesson.

Teaching assistants are well briefed and work closely with class teachers, forming highly effective partnerships and making a very positive contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. They are an essential and important feature of the strong teaching team, particularly in the primary phase.

On the very few occasions when the pupils made limited progress, lesson planning was inadequate and the work set was too easy.

The primary curriculum is well planned and organised coherently. It has some very good features, and makes good use of opportunities to draw on the rich heritage and distinctive environment of the Isles of Scilly. At Key Stage 3, the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught for suitable periods of time and at Key Stage 4, there is a small range of options with some opportunity for work-based learning. The provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is generally satisfactory although the quality of support offered to teachers is too variable. There are good curriculum links between each base and each key stage; these are enhancing the pupils' experience as well as improving their achievement.

Imaginative and wide-ranging links with other schools and different communities add a valuable global perspective to the pupils' experiences.

There are timely plans for developing a new curriculum model from September 2006, although a final decision has not been made about how it will be organised, taught or funded so that it meets fully the future needs and aspirations of the pupils of the Isles of Scilly.

Assessment is a strength of the school. There are very good systems for setting challenging but realistic targets for the pupils. The teachers have high expectations and make frequent checks on the pupils' progress. Most teachers have a very good understanding of what the pupils know, understand and can do and consequently plan work so that it meets the pupils' different learning needs. With a few exceptions, marking is very good and helps the pupils understand what level they are working at and what they need to do to improve.

## Leadership and management

The headteacher provides very good, determined and effective leadership. He has been instrumental in steering the school successfully through a difficult and turbulent period, ensuring a relentless focus on improvement at all levels. He has been particularly successful in restoring from a very low point, the morale and confidence of staff, pupils and parents. The base leader at Carn Gwaval provides very good support and effective leadership of the primary bases and the recently appointed acting deputy headteacher has strengthened the senior management team. There are very good procedures for monitoring and evaluation, including a rigorous programme to observe lessons and check the quality of the pupils' written work.

Subject leaders are taking a strong and effective lead in curriculum development and to establish dynamic departments where collaboration between the bases and the primary and secondary phase is a priority. In many subjects, this is having a strong influence on eliminating underachievement.

Governance is good. In particular, the chair and vice-chair of governors have a clear vision for the educational future of the school; they are dedicated and give very good support to the headteacher and all staff, ensuring that the governing body actively and effectively meets its statutory responsibilities. The determination and persistence of the vice-chair of governors in seeking a resolution of the school's budget settlement has been a key factor in securing improvement in the budget planning process.

Cambridge Education has been an important catalyst for improvement. Senior officers added momentum to ensure the conclusion of a budget settlement for the year 2004–05 and to strengthen financial planning. There has been good support for the governing body and a range of consultants has made a positive contribution to improving teaching and learning, leadership and curriculum planning. The Council for the Isles of Scilly and Cambridge Education are working closely together in partnership to establish a secure foundation for the future development of the school.

## Appendix – Information about the inspection

The Five Islands School was inspected in June and July 2003 by three HMI under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in December 2003 and in May and November 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of July 2003.

In April 2005, three HMI returned to inspect the school for four days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Thirty three lessons or parts of lessons, three assemblies and seven registration periods were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the senior management team, other senior teachers and some subject leaders, the chair and vice-chair of governors, representatives from Cambridge Education, the project manager for the School Improvement Partnership Board, the Secretary for Education for the Council of the Isles of Scilly and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of June and July 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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