

# Aragon Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	132167
<b>Local Authority</b>	Merton
<b>Inspection number</b>	315947
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barry Jones

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	455
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Tom Magill
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gill Wilson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Aragon Road Morden SM4 4QU
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8337 0505
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8337 4602

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Aragon is larger than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. There are higher proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and whose first language is not English than in most schools. In 2004, it became a full service extended school and was designated as a Children's Centre in 2007. It has Healthy Schools status and Activemark. In July 2006, it acquired a community arts studio with two resident artists. This is linked to an international initiative known as the 'Room 13' project.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Aragon is a good school. Pupils achieve well and there is a rising trend in standards throughout the school. Staff morale is high and they work hard to support the effective headteacher. Pastoral support is excellent and underpins the pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. This is recognised by parents who are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. As one wrote, 'Aragon is a school that has given both my children the confidence and independence to be effective learners'.

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage. Results have also improved in the last two years in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6. In 2007, standards were above average at both key stages and this reflects good achievement overall. However, pupils' progress through the school has not been even because of variations in the quality of teaching in the past. Many pupils have made exceptional progress in their reading, particularly those who started with low literacy skills, and attain high standards. Reading is resourced and taught extremely well and the school is constantly seeking ways to improve even further. Similarly, standards in science are high and the pupils demonstrate good knowledge and abilities to carry out practical work and investigations.

The school has been extremely successful in ensuring that the great majority of pupils, a higher proportion than in most schools, attain the expected level for eleven year-olds by the time they leave. Teaching is good overall but not consistently so. Its impact has been strengthened by rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress and of the quality of teaching, as well as the provision of extra resources when necessary. The school recognises that the proportion of pupils attaining the highest level by the end of Year 6 is only average. More able pupils make good progress in reading and science but some make slower progress in mathematics and writing. The school's own monitoring shows that there is a lower proportion of good teaching in these areas. In particular, teachers do not always set work that is sufficiently challenging and this slows progress. The school is taking robust action to address these weaknesses. This includes further training for staff, closer monitoring by subject coordinators and phase leaders, and extended use of intervention programmes. It is too early to judge their effectiveness but there are promising signs that pupils' progress is being accelerated in mathematics.

There is a good curriculum and many opportunities for pupils to engage in a rich range of extra-curricular activities. These contribute to the pupils' considerable enjoyment of school. Staff know their pupils well and relationships are excellent both between pupils and between adults and pupils. They provide a high quality of care and support and consequently pupils feel very safe and respond by behaving well. A considerable strength is the outstanding contribution that pupils make to the school and to the wider community. In particular, the 'Room 13' pupil committee and the school council are very active and influential. There is outstanding provision through science, physical education and specific courses to promote pupils' personal and social education. Hence, pupils develop an excellent understanding of healthy-living issues.

Senior leaders have consistently maintained very high levels of care. They are having increased success in raising pupils' achievement as shown by the rising trend in all three key stages. They have forged excellent partnerships to achieve a good quality of education and care. Academic guidance is good and is one of the contributory factors to the school's success. The new phase leaders have settled into their roles well and are beginning to have an impact. The governors

act effectively as critical friends. Given the school's track record, capacity to improve further is good.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The Foundation Stage is managed well and is used as a source of good practice by the local authority to support other schools. For instance, the school identified that more children than previously are entering the Nursery with low communication and language skills. These aspects received more attention and extra resources. Consequently, there has been a significant improvement in children's ability to link sounds and letters. Writing remains a relatively weaker skill. The environment inside and outside is exceptionally stimulating and is used well to provide children with exciting and interesting experiences. Communications with parents are a strength. They respond well and offer valued support for activities such as reading, mathematics and cooking. There is a clear agenda for improving further that is securely based on assessments and observations. This includes the training of several new staff and rebuilding a new Foundation Stage team. Children make good progress as a result of the good teaching and the rich and varied curriculum. Consequently, they start Year 1 with the skills expected for their age and exceed them in several respects.

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

- Ensure that more able pupils make good progress in mathematics and writing.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Results initially dipped following the previous inspection. However, in the last two years there have been significant improvements in the results at the end of the Foundation Stage, Year 2 and Year 6. This has partly reflected improvements in the quality of teaching. A significant contributory factor is the additional support for teaching through the improved use of data, training and feedback to teachers on the effectiveness of their teaching. Pupils with English as an additional language receive effective support and, over time, make the same progress as their classmates. In 2007, results were above average overall at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. There is some variation between subjects. Consequently, the school met its targets in reading and science but missed some of its targets in mathematics and writing.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is excellent. They show mature understanding through assemblies and in class. They have respect and tolerance for different beliefs and cultures. One pupil summed this up when he said, 'We get on really well together and share everything'. The Room 13 pupil committee raises sums of money to finance all its activities in the arts studio. They have been responsible for developing a variety of high quality activities including workshops and displays. The school council also make an outstanding contribution. They have helped to reorganise lunchtimes, participate in the school's decision making and have met local councillors to share their views on making the district a safe place. Pupils are prepared well for moving on to secondary school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers manage their classes well. They have established positive working atmospheres in which pupils come ready to learn. They make effective use of interactive whiteboards to make lessons more interesting and to explain concepts more clearly. Lesson objectives are clear and shared with pupils. As a result, pupils know what they are expected to learn and this helps them to make good progress. They also receive constructive feedback on how well they have done and how they might improve further. There are good opportunities for pupils to express and develop their ideas and effective use is made of 'talk partners'. Teachers vary in their effectiveness to set work to challenge the more able pupils. In a few mathematics lessons, particularly, the pace is too slow and pupils are not moved on to new work quickly enough.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

There is good provision for numeracy and literacy. The school has successful strategies for teaching reading. It is introducing a new approach to writing to boost performance in this area too. In the Foundation Stage the adults have increased the opportunities to assess the children's attainment. They use the information gained to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the children. The school has modified its curriculum well to reflect the changing diversity of the school population. For instance, an African storyteller and Chinese opera are examples of the way the curriculum has been broadened. The school has a very good range of extra-curricular activities that are well attended. There are also residential trips and visits, as well as visitors to the school which enhance pupils' experiences further. There are, however, too few opportunities for pupils to use their computer skills to support learning in other subjects.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Pastoral care is excellent. This is established from the child's first days in Nursery. It stems from the high quality support that individual teachers give to pupils. It is underpinned by the very caring ethos of the school. Good working with parents and very effective links with other agencies make a significant contribution to ensuring that vulnerable pupils are cared for very well. For instance, the school arranges for contacts from the Polish and Tamil communities to come to the school to help with the induction of new arrivals from these backgrounds. As part of its extended school provision the school has introduced a breakfast club, a youth club and holiday activities and these are very popular. There are robust procedures for monitoring attendance which has improved as a result, although this aspect needs continued reinforcement. Pupils who show challenging behaviour receive excellent help from support assistants. This enables them to make good progress. Pupils know their targets well and what they have to do to improve.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The management structure was reorganised significantly at the start of this school year. This strengthens the able senior leadership team. The new phase leaders together with subject coordinators have helped to remove some of the inconsistencies in teaching that the school identified in previous years. There is now more effective joint planning and a much greater sense of teamwork. This is apparent in the consistent implementation of new strategies for teaching reading and whole-school policies, for example the management of behaviour. Such initiatives by the school are underpinned by a thorough analysis of the data and supported by appropriate training. For instance, it has rightly identified as a priority raising the achievement of more able pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics. It has formulated detailed plans to address these areas and these are currently being implemented. Other analyses showed there to be a dip in performance in Years 3 and 4. Having identified the problem actions were taken, teaching improved and progress has accelerated. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

28 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aragon Primary School, Morden, SM4 4QU

Thank you for the warm welcome and your help and cooperation when we inspected your school. You told us that you enjoy coming to school very much and feel safe there. Your school council members impressed us and showed us how their views are valued. Your school council works well on your behalf. We enjoyed the assembly when the Room 13 pupils made a presentation about their work. You benefit from the studio and having the two artists in residence. This is shown by the high quality of artwork on display.

We agree with you and your parents that Aragon is a good school. These are the things we liked particularly:

- You do well in your work, especially in reading and science.
- Your behaviour is good and you all get along with one another exceptionally well.
- Adults in the school take excellent care of you.
- You have good teachers who work very hard.
- You have an excellent range of activities out of the classroom.
- The school is led well by the headteacher.

The school is not complacent and is always looking to improve further. There are two things that we have asked them to do in order to do this.

- Ensure that you do as well in writing and mathematics as you do in reading and science.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good.

For your part, make sure you ask if you do not understand. Your teachers will be very pleased to help you. It would be good if those of you who do not come to school regularly, could attend more frequently and enjoy the full benefit of this good education.

We wish you continuing success in the future.

Barry Jones

Lead Inspector