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1 March 2013

Carol Pratt  
Headteacher  
Featherstone Wood Primary School  
Featherstone Road  
Stevenage  
SG2 9PP

Dear Mrs Pratt

## **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Featherstone Wood Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 1 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, HMI held meetings with the headteacher and representatives from the governing body and the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's development plan were evaluated. The most recent information on pupils' progress was examined and the single central register was checked for accuracy. The headteacher conducted HMI on a brief tour of the school.

### **Context**

Since the recent inspection, one teacher has left the school and one is taking maternity leave. Both have been replaced. The appointment of a permanent teacher for Year 6 has been delayed, and both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are sharing some of the teaching with a supply teacher. Extensive building works are underway and due for completion by the end of March. Some pupils are taught in temporary accommodation while classrooms are being refurbished.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

School leaders, including the governing body, are focusing determinedly on teaching and learning to raise pupils' achievement. They are not preoccupied or distracted by potential barriers such as the building work. All agree that consistently good teaching will accelerate pupils' progress and these high expectations are communicated to staff.

The headteacher has developed a secure strategic plan, aligned to the local authority's statement of action and backed by the governing body, to achieve this goal. It includes high-quality support and coaching, tailored to need, for teaching that requires improvement. The school invests heavily in retaining good teachers through appraisal and access to high-quality professional development. The headteacher astutely utilises expertise from within and beyond the school. The best teachers mentor and coach others; good practice from the school's link partner school is shared widely; and local authority advisers provide specialist training, for example, in mathematics and behaviour management. As a consequence, the quality of teaching is improving steadily and most pupils are making sufficient progress. The development plan makes clear what will have been achieved at specific points in the journey towards becoming a good school, and this is reviewed regularly by staff, governors and the local authority.

Supported by the link school, the system for gathering accurate information about how well different groups of pupils are learning has been improved. The format is clear and accessible to staff at all levels and to governors. Senior leaders know how well individual pupils are learning and intervene with extra help where needed. Even so, teachers are not being held to account routinely for pupils' progress through regular meetings and discussions. Targets for pupils' achievement, endorsed by the local authority, are very challenging. At this point, there is some way to go if they are to be achieved by the end of the school year.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's development plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the governing body, and the Director of Education for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**