

# Hill Holt Wood

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		<b>17–20 June 2014</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider is good because:

- Learners are very successful in achieving their planned qualifications.
- High numbers of learners progress on to further education and/or employment.
- Good teaching and learning sessions stimulate learners' progress.
- Rangers give very effective support to overcome learners' specific barriers to success.
- Excellent use of the environment and resources help learners develop a wide range of skills.
- Health and safety are particularly well promoted, and learners' awareness well developed.
- Good individual feedback is given to learners to help them develop further.
- Particularly good incentives and ongoing support help staff to develop.
- Good business strategies are in place to help support learners.
- Regular stakeholder feedback effectively influences programme improvements.

### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Too few learners are undertaking qualifications in information communications technology (ICT).
- Some written review records relating to learners' progress are insufficiently detailed.
- Information, advice and guidance are sometimes delivered late in the training programme.
- Learners' overall attendance is not well recorded and absences are not sufficiently challenged.
- Observations of teaching and learning are not consistently reviewed and recorded.
- Quality improvement planning is not inclusive of all staff.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Refine the teaching and learning observation system and supporting paperwork to ensure consistency in recording and grading. Observe the full range of teaching and learning activity to include learner progress reviews, assessments and inductions so that any development needs are identified and provided.
- Through standardisation and ranger meetings, gather views to inform the quality improvement plan. Share the plan and areas of responsibility with all staff in order to support achievement of objectives.
- Complete and use the planned ICT facilities at HHW to ensure that all learners improve their skills in ICT and obtain qualifications where appropriate.
- Begin earlier in the programme effective advice and guidance on progression routes. Start work earlier on curriculum vitae preparation, interview techniques and considering career options, in order to provide a clearer focus and direction for learners.
- Improve the recording, collation and analysis of data on learners' attendance so that all absences, including those that are authorised due to circumstances such as illness, are captured and taken into account. Challenge learners more to justify absences.
- Complete individual learning plans and review records in more detail to capture fully all learners target achievements and progress towards them. Ensure that targets cover vocational, personal, and social goals comprehensively in order to present a full picture of learners' progress to date.
- Improve the planning of learning in order to maximise progress. Ensure English, mathematics and equality and diversity are appropriately included in lessons and learners' specific individual needs are planned for. Plan extension activities for the more able learners.
- Develop further strategies to support learners' English skills. Ensure that all rangers identify and develop learners' vocational vocabulary and learners' ability to apply techniques to improve their written English so that their verbal and written skills are in line with their vocational skills.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- In 2012/13 the proportion of Hill Holt Wood (HHW) learners who progressed from the study programme to further education or employment rose to a high level. This high rate of positive progression has been maintained in the current year so far, and learners who are coming to the end of their programmes have clear plans in place for their next steps, which include college courses and employment, including apprenticeships.
- The vast majority of learners achieve their intended key objectives, which include vocational and functional skills awards. Qualification achievement rates have remained consistently high for the last three years. A significant rise in the number of females undertaking programmes has taken place since the last inspection. No significant differences exist in the achievements of different groups of learners.
- Learners' attendance is satisfactory. Staff record learners' attendance and punctuality accurately and use this information to provide managers with summary data. However, authorised absences such as those due to illness are not included when calculating absences. The summary data held by managers shows a high attendance rate that is not always reflected in the number

of learners present during sessions. Staff do not challenge learners fully to improve their attendance to the level required by employers.

- Too few learners in previous years undertook qualifications in English and mathematics and very few undertook qualifications in ICT. Inspectors highlighted this concern in the previous inspection report. Managers have taken appropriate action and current learners are all working towards functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics at one level higher than their prior attainment.
- ICT provision is an area for development. Learners based at HHW are not developing their ICT skills sufficiently well due to a lack of suitable facilities. A new building, which is under construction and near completion, will house an ICT suite and a new training kitchen for the hospitality learners. Learners based in Gainsborough already have access to a good range of high-quality ICT facilities which learners use in the HHW centre.
- Learners develop their employability skills very effectively through the range of commercial activities undertaken at HHW, which provides rich and varied work experience. Rangers devise individual learners' timetables each week to prioritise their access to the commercial activities taking place on the site and their exposure to real work. In addition to the woodland management tasks, learners benefit from developing their construction skills through various projects on the site and at the social housing project. They develop a good understanding of sustainable development. Learners develop their confidence, maturity and communication skills very well.
- HHW provides an holistic learning experience that develops learners' personal qualities and social skills well through a range of innovative projects and activities. For example, hospitality learners participate in the 'Branching Out' project whereby older members of the local community attend HHW once a month. Learners cook and serve a three-course lunch, they follow this with discussions and activities in which the older people and learners get to know one another. Learners also benefit from working with adults who attend HHW as part of a project to improve their mental health
- HHW is very effective in helping learners to overcome their educational and personal difficulties in order to progress. Learners have a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities and many take medication to manage their behaviour. Despite these challenges, learners are making good progress in English and mathematics, as well their vocational programmes. Many learners have completed their functional skills work.

### **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good as reflected in the outcomes for learners. Staff are experienced in their subject areas, have high expectations of their learners and provide very good support to help them achieve these expectations. They use their subject knowledge well to inspire learners to work and succeed. HHW provides regular opportunities for learners to meet with members of the wider community, for example at a service of remembrance held on site. These activities provide excellent opportunities to gain understanding of other people's needs and concerns and effectively promote citizenship development. Staff make excellent use of the high-quality rural environment. They expect learners to accept responsibility for improving aspects of their own work and behaviour.
- Learners are particularly attentive and learn well in most training sessions. Good links are frequently made between theory topics and related practical work. In the best sessions, opportunities to explore wider learning such as mathematics and English, equality and diversity, are exploited and incorporated. Group sizes in lessons are often small, and sometimes individual; this allows high levels of supervision. In the best cases, staff provide a good degree of challenge to extend learners' understanding and skill. For example, one unprompted question

from a learner in carpentry was effectively exploited by the ranger into a productive discussion on the use of a lathe, types of wood and their suitability for turning.

- Lesson plans are satisfactory overall. However they do not always maximise learning by planning to optimise use of visual as well as verbal methods to support learning, or by considering how best to incorporate wider learning into sessions.
- Practical resources for land-based subjects, including conservation and woodland work and development of personal and social skills using the natural environment, are excellent. Learners undertake a good range of practical work while working towards their qualifications, including garden contracts, cutting, pruning and planting trees. In all subject areas, particularly good use is made of contract work, for example the maintenance of conservation areas and footpaths within the local district council area; some of this work is of significant amenity value to local residents and economic benefit to the district. These experiences add realism to the work learners undertake, help HHW provide extensive and high-quality work experiences for learners and support good progress in vocational as well as personal and social skill development.
- Rangers provide good feedback to learners as part of teaching sessions. HHW develops good health and safety awareness in learners to enable them to take part safely in potentially dangerous practical activities. Learners feel safe both around the HHW centre and when doing site work around the county.
- Initial assessment is conducted for mathematics, English and a range of personal characteristics and is satisfactory. Most learners make rapid progress through their main qualification aim, although arrangements to provide extension or further challenge to early completers are not yet fully developed.
- The recently revised individual learning plan now is a clear working document which is present in the learners' file and updated at each review. However, as yet it is insufficiently detailed, for example in outlining learning aims or target setting and does not provide a good progress reference point for learners. Reviews of progress are regular but written records are insufficiently detailed.
- All learners without previous qualification exemptions are now working towards functional skills in mathematics and English. Dedicated mathematics and English sessions are held, most of which are very effective. Better vocational teaching sessions incorporate relevant mathematics and English into learners' vocational work, for example, calculating areas of grass to cut or heights of trees being studied. Not all sessions do this to the same good standard; weaker sessions fail to explain sufficiently the concepts required to ensure learners' understanding. Little mathematics is incorporated into learners' formal vocational written work. Some correction of spelling, grammar and punctuation takes place but HHW has not yet developed sufficient additional strategies to support improvement, where learners' written English is particularly weak.
- Rangers and managers provide very effective additional support for learners with additional needs. Learners benefit from some of the project work undertaken. For example, they are eligible to rent a room within one of the houses which HHW renovates and makes available as residential accommodation to young homeless people. Many learners have complex needs, especially emotional and social. Staff provide support enthusiastically; this support is effective in helping learners work towards a worthwhile future life and career. Formal impartial careers guidance sessions support and help learners consider their next steps and the skills they will need to take them. However, for some learners this starts too late in their programme.
- A good sense of mutual respect is present between learners and rangers; the development of citizenship skills is very effective as work progresses to care for local environments. A culture of equality exists throughout HHW, however, learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity topics is not always sufficiently developed from points which may arise naturally from teaching and learning sessions.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management****Good**

- Highly committed and enthusiastic trustees and senior managers have a clear business vision and range of strategies to ensure the long-term future of HHW. The continued focus on the learners' experience is core to the business as exemplified by a staff member from the training delivery team sitting on the trustee board. All activities, particularly additional income generation, are well geared to fund and support disadvantaged learners and provide good-quality work experience. Trustees take a particularly active role in HHW and are invited to join the board subject to the skills and knowledge they can bring to help develop the enterprise. Trustees have received formal governance training. The senior managers at HHW communicate well with the chair of trustees and other board members. Well-devised succession and strategic development planning is based on a three-year timescale. Trustees are fully aware of the challenges identified through self-assessment and quality improvement planning. They work well with senior managers to assist and facilitate improvement.
- Comprehensive quality systems and processes are in place to maintain and improve the quality of teaching and learning. An annual quality calendar effectively supports and directs quality improvement activity. Rangers and managers take opportunities to share good practice through regular standardisation meetings, particularly to ensure consistent assessment activity. The process for observing teaching and learning is currently being revised, which had led to delays in classroom observation activity. Although observations of all sessions are currently planned, only one has taken place this year. Observers do not use recording documentation consistently and do not take up the full range of opportunities to observe other key activities, for example reviews, assessment and inductions. An external partnership arrangement with a local teaching university has been formulated to support the HHW observation programme.
- HHW incentivises staff in an innovative way to perform well and remain with the enterprise by offering access, on a five-yearly cycle, to generous development opportunities which enhance their knowledge of either their subject area or other related activity. Examples include rangers visiting forestry and social enterprises world-wide to gain and share knowledge. Staff value these opportunities highly and take full advantage of them. Regular, formal staff appraisal takes place and staff are set clear targets across all the business priorities of the organisation. The chief executive officer monitors targets regularly. A significant and varied range of staff development takes place annually as a result of staff appraisal.
- Since the previous inspection HHW has demonstrated a significant capacity to improve. Self-assessment supported by the recent position statements for each aspect demonstrates a recognition of the ability to be self-critical and transfer findings to a well-written quality improvement plan. Although regularly monitored by the senior management team the plan is not shared well with other staff; as a result they are not clear on the impact they can have on the achievement of the development objectives.
- HHW seeks regularly the views of stakeholders. Inspectors identified good examples of both staff, learner and employer feedback leading to improvements. Examples include revisions to safety clothing, access to homework and the opportunity for learners to work with small animals.
- Highly effective networking on a local and national basis ensures the organisation is fully aware of the current and future needs of learners. Membership of a range of both central and local government bodies allows HHW to influence and share its expertise in social enterprise activities and ensure the needs of learners and employers are well met. Regular high-profile visitors support and promote the HHW ethos. HHW learners work well within the local community.
- Since the last inspection, managers have improved their use of data to improve outcomes for learners and to monitor and evaluate the provision. Staff responsibilities have been revised to place a greater emphasis on data management. Staff have received training in how to use the commercial software package for managing the learning programmes more effectively.

Management reports are now more focused; both senior managers and trustees have a better understanding of HHW performance across a range of activity. Managers track individual learners' progress well.

- Equality and diversity are a major priority for HHW. Learners value the individualised removal of barriers to learning that they had encountered previously. E-safety is a particularly high priority and learners benefit from guidance on the safe use of social media and the internet. The provision of good individual support and guidance enable good management of any potential harassment and bullying issues at HHW. Examples include all learners being met at the gate by staff and seats being allocated on transport to ensure learners feel secure.
- Staff have high levels of awareness of equality and diversity. They promote a culture of the acceptance and respect of difference throughout the organisation. External agencies link well with HHW to provide additional external support for learners with specific needs. Targeting and monitoring of learners' performance to ensure all groups perform equally are very effective; no discernible gaps in learners' achievement exist.
- HHW meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Learners feel safe and well protected. Inspectors identified good examples of HHW dealing particularly well with safeguarding issues. All staff are formally trained in safeguarding and have responsibility for, and are trained in, specific aspects which include for example sexual health, bereavement and HIV awareness. Clear records of all staff members' safeguarding history are well maintained. The management of health and safety is particularly effective. Monitoring arrangements in the training centres and the workplace involve external specialists carrying out regular comprehensive monitoring visits, some of which are unannounced. Safeguarding is a regular discussion item at all formal meetings, with staff making good use of their experience to formulate good practice.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Hill Holt Wood		
<b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b>  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	16-19 study programmes
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Employability training</b>	<b>2</b>

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	65							
CEO	Karen Lowthrop							
Date of previous inspection	5 March 2013							
Website address	www.hillholtwood.com							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	28	0	23	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+	
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	51							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							



## Contextual information

HHW is a registered social enterprise and charity based in ancient woodland in Norton Disney, Lincolnshire. The provider manages a total of 700 acres of woodland and amenity land across the locality where a team of rangers and senior rangers deliver HHW's training provision. Since the previous inspection, two training centres and a community housing project have been acquired in Gainsborough. The majority of learners have a recognised social or learning need and/or a disability. Learners are based in Lincoln, Gainsborough and Newark. According to the latest census, the percentage of pupils achieving five GCSEs in the area was slightly above the national rate. The unemployment rate for the region of Lincolnshire is slightly higher than the national rate of four per cent.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Tim Hanson AI

Three additional inspectors, assisted by the chief executive officer (CEO) as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area listed in the report above.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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