

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Hill Holt Wood**

**11 February 2005**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

## Overall judgement

Where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, **or**
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory.

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Hill Holt Wood

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the inspection	2
Overall judgement	2
Grades	2
Key findings	3
What learners like about Hill Holt Wood	7
What learners think Hill Holt Wood could improve	7
Key challenges for Hill Holt Wood	8

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	9
Equality of opportunity	12
Quality assurance	13
Foundation programmes	15

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Hill Holt Wood (HHW) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, limited by guarantee, based in 34 acres of deciduous woodland situated on the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire border near Newark. The woodland was purchased in 1997 by its present owners with the ambition of creating a self-sustaining woodland for the benefit of the local community. HHW has developed into a social enterprise currently employing 14 people, including the owners, and provides vocational training for young unemployed people and for those excluded from school. One of the owners fulfils the role of operations manager, including the management of training programmes.

2. HHW was accredited with the Investors in People standard, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people, in April 2001 and has recently completed a successful re-assessment. HHW started its woodland project in 1999 with the aim of engaging disadvantaged young people in conservation work and projects to improve biodiversity and thereby provide new learning experiences and training leading to eventual employment. At that time, HHW delivered training programmes as part of the New Deal environment task force.

3. As well as income attracted through its woodland projects, HHW is funded by Lincolnshire Education Authority for the delivery of the Solutions 4 programme and Lincolnshire and Rutland Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the delivery of the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme. The Solutions 4 programme is for 14 to 16 year old pupils excluded from school, and was not inspected. The contract for E2E was awarded in August 2003 and provides vocationally-based training for unemployed 16 to 18 year olds with records of under-achievement at school and low self-esteem.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### Foundation programmes

4. HHW has a contract to provide a 20-week E2E programme for 12 learners, focusing on those with literacy and numeracy skills below level 1. At the time of inspection, however, 19 learners were registered on the programme including four who had remained on programme after the initial 20 weeks. Learners are referred to the programme by Connexions or are self-referred. The programme is designed for young people not yet ready to enter education, training and/or employment. All learners on the programme are identified as having additional learning needs. Learners complete an extended period of induction of up to six weeks when their personal, social and learning needs are assessed and their individual programmes of learning are planned. Barriers to progression are identified and actions put in place to deal with social problems such as inadequate living arrangements, rural isolation and transport difficulties. Learners receive support to enable them to tackle low self-esteem, challenging behaviour and lack of confidence as well as learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## HILL HOLT WOOD

5. HHW uses the woodland as the main environment for learning. Tutors are known as rangers, and they comprise a team of instructors with a range of qualifications and experience in conservation, woodland management, ecology and construction skills. Vocational training is based upon an entry level certificate in skills for working life. All learners complete mandatory health and safety units and choose to follow practical units in construction or conservation. Learners engage in a range of practical projects including dry hedging, coppicing the wood and building with straw bales. Much of their time is spent outdoors. The certificate is integrated with training in literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills. Learners also receive training in jobsearch skills and a range of additional programme options including the Duke of Edinburgh's bronze award, drama, drugs awareness, art and design, and rural crafts. Each learner's progress is reviewed monthly and review sessions are attended by the Connexions personal adviser. Learners are expected to attend HHW each day of the week for a total of 30 hours.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learner interviews	17
Number of staff interviews	20
Number of employer interviews	3
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	4
Number of partner/external agency interviews	5

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. The provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, HHW's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are its arrangements for quality assurance and its approach to equality of opportunity. The foundation training programme is good.

## GRADES

*grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak*

<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Employability/employment training</b> - Entry to Employment	19	2

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

7. The learners are well motivated and are keen to attend HHW. They are quick to emphasise the enjoyment and satisfaction they feel through completing woodland projects. **The learners have developed the attitudes and skills necessary for effective participation and they fully engage in the activities.** They work well as individuals and as members of a team, demonstrate good standards of practical skills and show an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the ecology of the woodland.

8. **Retention and attendance rates are very high in 2004-05 so far**, with retention improving markedly from 2003-04. HHW has high expectations for learners' attendance and punctuality, and challenges and takes action over unauthorised absence and unexplained lateness.

9. **Learners increase their confidence and self-esteem** and many experience achievement for the first time by gaining certificates, completing courses and making positive contributions to the HHW community. Learners increase their personal effectiveness by improving skills such as communication skills and by demonstrating an increased willingness and interest to participate in projects. Learners show great commitment to their learning programmes and take pride in their achievements.

10. HHW's staff place strong emphasis in the learning programmes upon the development of learners' personal effectiveness and the acquisition of vocational skills. Learners progress satisfactorily into further education, training and/or employment. **The rate of achievement of level 1 qualifications is low**, however, and learners are not achieving the nationally recognised qualifications available.

### Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Foundation programmes	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>

11. Teaching is innovative and learners are keen to learn. Staff plan the learning sessions

## HILL HOLT WOOD

well and incorporate a variety of interesting and challenging activities. Teaching is delivered at a pace and level suited to the individual needs of the learners and teaching sessions fully engage the learners. The staff use their knowledge and experience effectively to inspire the learners and motivate them to achieve. Learners are given full opportunity to express their knowledge and to demonstrate their practical skills. Staff and learners have developed strong working relationships, based on mutual respect.

12. HHW makes effective use of the woodland learning environment to capture the interest of the learners. They enjoy working outside and learning about the rural environment and acquiring new knowledge and skills. The experience of learners is being broadened and they are receiving a planned and well-structured programme containing a range of choices and enrichment activities.

13. Learning programmes are well resourced and there are enough experienced and suitably qualified staff to meet the learning and support needs of the learners. Specialist equipment, including ICT resources, fully supports the learning programmes. The learners are provided with appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing for the learning sessions conducted in the woodland. Health and safety are reinforced throughout learning.

14. Arrangements for initially assessing the learning and support needs of learners are good. Staff record learners' personal needs and preferences and use them to develop individual learning plans which contain clearly identified learning goals and targets for progression. The senior ranger reviews the progress of each learner monthly and these sessions are attended by the Connexions personal adviser.

15. **The staff provide high levels of support for learners to meet a wide range of needs.** Weekly staff meetings are held to review the progress and needs of learners and to devise strategies for support. Staff demonstrate a caring attitude towards the learners and a sensitivity to their needs. Support is often provided by encouraging learners to help themselves to overcome their difficulties.

16. HHW has formed very effective partnerships with local employers. **These employers are supportive of the learners and offer them interesting and challenging work** which widens their vocational experience, and in some cases leads to job offers. **However, the numbers of employers offering work places is insufficient to meet demand** and only a minority of learners experience work placements or tasters.

## Leadership and management

17. **Managers at HHW have effective partnership arrangements**, enabling them to work closely with a range of local and national organisations to support learners and monitor their progress. HHW works in collaboration with two local training providers, sharing facilities, ideas and good practice. HHW's staff have attended workshops, held at HHW and run by the local LSC, focusing on self-assessment and development planning as part of the quality improvement plan.



18. **HHW is strongly committed to the continuing professional development of its staff** and plans for its annual programme of staff training events as well as responding positively to individual needs. The improvement of teaching qualifications held by staff has been given high priority within this year's staff training programme.

19. **HHW's staff make excellent use of the extensive training resources and woodland environment in planning and delivering training.** The natural resource of the woodland provides many new learning experiences, and staff manage this aspect effectively to enable the learners to acquire countryside knowledge and skills. Learners value, respect and feel an ownership of the environment, and are fully involved in its maintenance.

20. Managers at HHW hold meetings with staff and learners frequently and lines of communication are satisfactory. Staff meet weekly to discuss organisational matters, as well as reviewing learners' progress and needs and putting into place action plans for support. The training manager ensures that training is co-ordinated and well managed. Staff members work well together and are mutually supportive. Learners' views are conveyed to staff through the learners' group which meets regularly.

21. HHW's managers have introduced satisfactory processes for business and strategic planning. They have collaborated well with the Regional Development Agency to formulate a business plan integrating the ecological and environmental sustainability of HHW with the effective delivery of government-funded vocational training programmes.

22. **Staff at HHW do not make sufficient use of management information systems** to inform them of learners' progress and to guide action-planning. The staff do not routinely use data from the management information systems when setting learners' targets and learning goals. Managers do not make full use of the system to evaluate trends in learners' achievements and progression as part of quality monitoring. Managers primarily use the management information systems to ensure contract compliance in matters relating to funding.

23. **Staff reinforce learners' awareness and understanding of equality and diversity in all elements of the programme.** They are strongly supportive of equality and diversity and they respond quickly to rectify infringements of HHW's equal opportunities policy. The policy is detailed and comprehensive and subject to annual review as part of quality assurance. Learners feel confident that HHW is an organisation which works effectively to eliminate discrimination and harassment.

24. **People with restricted mobility find some teaching and social areas of the site difficult to access.** Managers at HHW have sought to resolve this problem, and an organisation representing people with disabilities has completed an access audit of the wood. HHW has acted upon recommendations for improvements in the audit, but access difficulties remain and there are no toilets accessible for people with restricted mobility.

25. **Staff at HHW have introduced a very thorough process for self-assessment.** Self-assessment lies at the core of the organisation's quality assurance system. All staff at HHW are fully involved in self-assessment and the views of all stakeholders, including

board members and learners, are sought and incorporated into the report. The development plan clearly identifies actions to rectify weaknesses and to consolidate strengths. Most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the inspectors were included in the self-assessment report.

26. HHW has introduced a quality assurance system with policies and procedures relating to all aspects of its business. Managers routinely review and update these policies and procedures and staff have a good understanding of the system. **Some aspects of quality assurance, however, are not yet fully established** as daily practices and the system has yet to be used fully to generate guidance for action-planning and strategic development.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- very effective partnership arrangements
- high level of commitment to staff development
- excellent use of training resources and natural environment
- effective reinforcement of equality and diversity in all programme elements
- very thorough self-assessment process

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient use of management information systems to guide progress and improvement
- insufficiently established quality assurance practices in some areas
- poor access for people with restricted mobility

## **Foundation programmes**

### ***Employability/employment training***

#### *Strengths*

- very effective engagement of learners through innovative teaching programmes
- high level of support for learners
- good development of self-esteem and personal effectiveness
- high retention and attendance rates for 2004-05
- very supportive work placements

#### *Weaknesses*

- low achievement rates for level 1 qualifications in literacy and numeracy
- insufficient opportunities for work placements or tasters

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT HILL HOLT WOOD:**

- creating and achieving - 'great that the things we make are in wood and put on display'
- working outdoors with nature
- the learning environment - 'it's not like school, not boring'
- how we are treated - 'it's like being in a job and treated like an adult'
- meeting new people and doing new activities
- that the people we work with understand - 'the rangers are down to earth'
- that the people really care - 'the bosses are grafters, they're spot on'
- being in Hill Holt Wood - 'I love it here, even when it's raining!'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK HILL HOLT WOOD COULD IMPROVE:**

- the standards of behaviour in the canteen
- the toilet facilities - 'we really hate the earth loos!'

## **KEY CHALLENGES FOR HILL HOLT WOOD:**

- increase number and range of work placements.
- raise achievement rates on level 1 qualifications
- make full use of management information systems
- improve access for people with restricted mobility
- maintain good attendance and high retention rates

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### Grade 2

#### Strengths

- very effective partnership arrangements
- high level of commitment to staff development
- excellent use of training resources and natural environment
- effective reinforcement of equality and diversity in all programme elements
- very thorough self-assessment process

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient use of management information systems to guide progress and improvement
- insufficiently established quality assurance practices in some areas
- poor access for people with restricted mobility

27. HHW has highly effective partnership arrangements with a range of local and national organisations. Case workers for the Youth Offending Service and Connexions are regular visitors to HHW and work closely with training staff and management to support learners and follow progress. Taster days are provided for individuals who are being supervised by Youth Offending Service and these are highly valued by prospective learners. Conservation and forestry have proved attractive and rehabilitative to some learners who initially attend HHW as excluded school pupils and then return on the E2E programme.

28. HHW works closely with the local LSC and uses and values the support provided. The local LSC's staff have run on-site workshops for HHW's staff around self-assessment and development planning and HHW is active in the E2E network for LSC providers. The organisation also works closely with two local providers, sharing facilities, ideas and good practice. HHW has worked closely with the local authority's traveller education service, successfully integrating learners from this community. Staff now have a better understanding of travellers, and learners are more tolerant towards them. HHW has worked closely with a local agricultural college and a learner from the E2E programme has been accepted on the college's full-time countryside management programme, with certain aspects of the programme tailored to the learner's individual needs.

29. Employers who provide work placements and work tasters have visited the project and observed the E2E learners in their own environment. This has prompted employers to become actively involved with HHW and provide places for what can be a hard-to-place group. Local employers including a national supermarket chain visit HHW and give motivational talks to learners.

## HILL HOLT WOOD

30. The local NHS Trust works closely with HHW and uses the woodland environment to counsel individuals who are not comfortable in closed in counselling sessions. Individuals who have used this facility sometimes return as members of the E2E group. This strength was identified in HHW's self-assessment report.

31. HHW is very committed to developing its staff. Staff already have a range of good qualifications ranging from degrees in forestry, plant sciences and ecology to certificates in crafts and conservation-related areas. Staff are currently undergoing a range of development activities and HHW has a comprehensive learning plan for the forthcoming year. Three staff members are about to begin formal teacher training qualifications, and one member of staff is following an accountancy technicians programme. Other staff members are currently attending, or will attend, a range of training activity including countryside management qualifications, ecology and rural crafts programmes and a range of behavioural awareness programmes.

32. Learners value the knowledge that staff currently hold and the range of experience and expertise that is shared among the diverse workforce. Training opportunities that arise as the year progresses are discussed and, on the basis of personal or business development needs, are fully supported both financially and in time away from the job. Staff and learners have attended countryside management training programmes together. Both parties enjoy the parity and learners particularly value the esteem that this brings them.

33. HHW uses its extensive training resources and the natural woodland environment to give learners a unique experience, through both training in woodland and countryside skills and real work experience. Classrooms are built of ecologically friendly materials and learners are taught these methods of construction. A well-equipped ICT classroom has been built with the same construction methods and has a glass observation panel in the wall as a constant reminder of the ecologically friendly nature of the building. Learners value the use of natural materials and become aware of how nature needs to be sustained and carefully managed.

34. The classroom and canteen areas are furnished with benches and tables manufactured by learners using wood from the HHW site. Learners value and respect the buildings and furnishings as they feel ownership through being involved in their construction. HHW manages the natural resource of the wood well to give different experiences and provide them with a range of activities during their time on programme. Learners are introduced to equipment which ranges from extremely basic hand tools for wood carving through to industry-standard forest and logging equipment. As a not-for-profit organisation, HHW reinvests monies in equipment, training materials and facilities. HHW identifies this as a strength in its self-assessment report.

35. Communications at HHW are satisfactory. A range of staff meetings have formal agendas and are minuted, with action points identified. Staff meet weekly to discuss general activity in relation to the training programmes and have separate weekly case study meetings to discuss individual learners and their progress. Good practice is shared between staff at both these meetings. Bi-monthly health and safety meetings take place,

with a learners' representative present. Learners also have their own representative body called the 'way ahead group'. This group meets regularly, with minutes taken and required actions communicated to HHW's staff. Learners particularly value the formality and responsibility this group gives them.

36. HHW manages and delivers literacy and numeracy skills teaching well. Skills acquired by learners, however, are not leading to qualifications and the management of opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications is less than satisfactory. All learners have their literacy and numeracy skills support needs routinely assessed and are set learning goals as part of their individual learning plans. Dedicated literacy and numeracy teaching sessions are included in the weekly programme and are delivered by suitably qualified staff.

37. HHW's board meets every three months, with executive meetings held monthly. The board includes one of HHW's rangers, who was democratically elected by staff ballot. Staff value this representation at board level, which ensures that direct two-way communication is taking place and gives them the opportunity to raise concerns and gain accurate feedback from their elected representative. All staff members receive a staff handbook at induction. HHW makes full use of notice boards in the staff areas to update and inform its employees. A document of the week is identified and staff are required to familiarise themselves with it. Risk assessments for the week's woodland activity are also posted on the notice boards so that staff can direct and instruct learners of the required safe working practices for the week.

38. Business planning processes at HHW are satisfactory, with the project director taking the lead on business and strategic planning. HHW has collaborated with the Regional Development Agency to formulate a business plan which encompasses and integrates the government-funded programmes into the overall vision for the ecological and environmental sustainability of the business and the woodland. Staff are aware of the importance of business planning in this environment and are set targets accordingly as part of the staff appraisal process.

39. HHW uses the 'Common Inspection Framework' as a supporting document when planning and formulating initiatives for the government-funded training programmes. All staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Staff have job descriptions and receive annual appraisal focusing particularly on development activity that will enhance their knowledge and performance and help the organisation achieve its business plan objectives. All staff receive a thorough induction on joining HHW and serve a six-month probationary period, with a three-month intermediate review.

40. HHW has a management information system which includes both paper-based and computer-based systems. Currently the management information system complies with the funding body's requirements. It provides basic information on learners and some monitoring with regard to equality of opportunity and diversity. However, HHW does not make full use of the system to provide up-to-date information on learners' progress and trends in performance and achievement. This is identified as a weakness in the self-

assessment report.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

41. HHW has a detailed and comprehensive equal opportunities policy which was reviewed and updated in December 2004. It reviews the policy, and its equal opportunities statement, each year as part of its quality assurance arrangements. A designated staff member is responsible for the implementation of HHW's equal opportunities policy. The policy and statement give clear indication of HHW's support of equality and diversity. Clear disciplinary procedures are in place for dealing with cases of discrimination and harassment. HHW adopts a zero tolerance policy towards bullying. Equality and diversity are included in the induction programmes for staff and learners and equality of opportunity is discussed at learners' reviews and during staff appraisals. In-service training for staff covers equality. Equality and diversity considerations are incorporated into many of HHW's documents, such as work-placement providers' agreements and lesson plans, although equality and diversity are not specifically mentioned in the learning agreements signed by learners. All work placements are inspected and monitored for their equal opportunities arrangements, and employers agree to abide by the policies laid down by HHW.

42. HHW is an environment in which learners are treated with respect and are expected to treat others with respect. Learners are treated in a manner appropriate to their needs. All staff are fully committed to supporting equality and diversity and they are quick to respond to infringements of the guidelines laid down by HHW's policies. Staff endeavour to reinforce awareness and understanding of equality matters in all elements of the learning programme. Staff responded positively to the equality and diversity challenges created by the enrolment of a woman from the traveller community. Prejudice from other learners about the traveller community led to hostile reactions and discrimination towards this learner. HHW held a series of workshops to discuss the matter and break down the prejudice. The outcome was a better understanding and awareness of the social enrichment brought into HHW by recruitment of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

43. HHW conducts routine monitoring of learners' and staff members' profiles for gender, age, ethnicity and disability and presents the findings in quarterly reports to the management. However, it does not use the collected data actively to develop strategies, and the action it takes to promote equality and diversity tends to be responsive rather than part of a planned strategy. The number of female learners perpetuates the stereotypical profile for disaffected pupils, with only three women registering onto the programme since August 2003. Reasons for this have not been fully explained, and HHW's long-term plans to attract more female learners are not clear. However, HHW is strongly supportive of its female learners and has arranged a work placement at a motor repair and servicing company at the request of the only female learner currently on programme. Minority ethnic groups comprise less than 2 per cent of the local population and this is reflected in the E2E learner profile, with no black or Asian learners registered.

44. People with restricted mobility find it difficult to access some areas of the site.



HHW's managers are fully aware of the problem, however, and have sought to resolve it. In February 2004, at the request of HHW, a local association for people with disabilities carried out an audit of the wood and premises. The audit assessed the accessibility of the site for people with restricted mobility and sensory impairments and made recommendations for improvement. The report highlighted the fact that full accessibility may never be achieved because of the nature of the environment. HHW has implemented several of the recommendations including better signs on the site, improvement of drives and woodland pathways, the establishment of designated car parking for disabled people, and ramps to aid access to buildings. However, access to many teaching and social areas remains difficult and the site has no toilets accessible for people with restricted mobility. A project to fund and design an accessible earth toilet, in keeping with the environmentally friendly policy of the organisation, is being carried out and remains a management priority.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 3**

45. HHW has a quality assurance system which is managed by the office administrator. The system is based on a range of policies and procedures which are updated regularly. Staff have a good understanding of the quality assurance system and are fully aware of their responsibilities to ensure policies and procedures are followed. A quality cycle portrayed in a chronological format identifies when in the year aspects of quality assurance activity have to be carried out. The office administrator monitors and audits this to ensure activities take place as programmed.

46. HHW has a very thorough self-assessment process. The current self-assessment report was produced in December 2004. It is well written and forms a sound basis for the inspection. The latest self-assessment report is the third one the organisation has compiled against the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Self-assessment workshops were held with staff and the LSC provided support to one of these events. Staff contributed to the self-assessment report as did board members. Employers' and learners' views were also sought. Staff are aware of the self-assessment report and, in particular, the development plan, which is well written and clearly identifies actions to rectify the identified weaknesses and consolidate the proposed strengths.

47. Staff are set targets to ensure that the objectives included in the development plan are achieved. Staff have a one-hour session each month to review targets and progress with the managing director, who has overall responsibility for satisfactory delivery of the development plan and its ongoing direction. The self-assessment report accurately proposed most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. Its proposed grades matched those given by the inspectors in four of the six areas graded, and were a grade lower than those given by the inspectors in the other two areas.

48. Certain aspects of the quality assurance system are not yet fully established within HHW and have not yet supported continuous improvement. For example, observations of teaching sessions have been carried out but have not been reported back in a way to ensure any required improvements identified are actioned. HHW has developed a formal plan for teaching observations for this calendar year but has not yet shared this

#### HILL HOLT WOOD

with all teaching staff. A range of feedback is being obtained from learners through the 'way ahead' focus group, after their induction process and when they leave the programmes. Although focus group feedback has led to improvements in amenities and behaviour, HHW does not collect feedback in a systematic way or formally analyse it. Employers' feedback is sought following placements but the response rate has been poor, as it has for exit questionnaires. HHW has recognised this and is introducing new initiatives to ensure feedback is gained from all parties. Audits of the quality assurance system are taking place but are not currently being carried out in a systematic way.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Employability/employment training</i></b> - Entry to Employment	19	2

### ***Employability/employment training***

#### *Strengths*

- very effective engagement of learners through innovative teaching programmes
- high level of support for learners
- good development of self-esteem and personal effectiveness
- high retention and attendance rates for 2004-05
- very supportive work placements

#### *Weaknesses*

- low achievement rates for level 1 qualifications in literacy and numeracy
- insufficient opportunities for work placements or tasters

### **Achievement and standards**

49. The learners are well motivated and enjoy their training programme. They have developed the attitudes and skills necessary for effective participation and they fully engage in the activities. Learners work well as individuals and display good team-working skills. They demonstrate good standards of practical skills and show an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the ecology of the woodland in which they are working.

50. Learners are keen to attend HHW and they are quick to emphasise the enjoyment and satisfaction they feel through completing woodland projects. Learners are expected to attend five days each week. The retention rate for 2004-05 is high at 88 per cent and has increased from 62 per cent for 2003-04. Attendance this year is very high at 95 per cent. HHW has challenging expectations for learners' attendance and punctuality, and these are being met fully. Attendance and punctuality are routinely monitored and prompt action is taken in cases of unauthorised absence or unexplained lateness. HHW is particularly responsive to dealing with transport difficulties, which may otherwise prevent attendance, by using HHW's vehicles or taxis.

51. A major strength of the training programme is its increasing of learners' self-esteem and its development of their personal effectiveness. Four learners with learning difficulties have remained on course beyond the initial 20 weeks. All have increased in

## HILL HOLT WOOD

confidence and are acquiring practical skills. Many learners experience achievement for the first time and show great pride in receiving certificates and awards at HHW's awards ceremonies, which all learners and staff attend. Learners' contributions to the community are recognised with in-house certificates, and this public recognition motivates them to achieve and to progress. Many learners have increased their personal effectiveness through improved communication skills and an increased willingness to participate in projects requiring commitment and teamwork skills. All learners completing the six-week induction programme achieve health and safety, and emergency first aid certificates awarded through an external organisation.

52. Learners' progression is satisfactory with 44 per cent of learners in 2003-04 moving into further education, training or employment. Seventeen of the 55 learners starting the programme in 2003-04 progressed into employment and seven learners progressed into further education or training. Fifty-three per cent of learners achieved their individual progression objectives. The learning programmes very much emphasise developing learners' personal effectiveness, enabling them to progress towards employment by acquiring vocational skills. The rate of achievement of level 1 qualifications is low, however, and learners are not always given the opportunity to achieve nationally recognised qualifications to enhance their prospects for employment. In 2003-04 only five learners achieved level 1 qualifications in literacy or numeracy. This year so far, no learners have achieved this goal. Learners have yet to achieve the entry level 3 certificate in skills for working life, on which the learning programme is based. All learners receive timetabled sessions to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Learners are grouped by ability so they can be taught at a pace and level appropriate to their needs. Teaching in these sessions is good and effective learning takes place.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Entry to Employment																
	2004-05		2003-04													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	17		55													
Progression <sup>1</sup>	0		24	44												
Achieved objectives <sup>2</sup>	0		29	53												
Still in learning	15		4	7												

1. Measured in terms of learners' movement to further training, education or employment, during or after their training

2. These being the key objectives identified for each learner while on E2E

## Quality of education and training

53. Learning sessions are planned and structured well and incorporate a variety of activities to engage and sustain the interest of the learners. Teaching is delivered at a pace and level appropriate to the needs of individual learners. All five sessions observed

were satisfactory or better. Two sessions were very good and fully captured the interest of the learners. Learners demonstrate their skills and knowledge and work cohesively as a group to complete set tasks. Staff and learners have developed strong working relationships based on mutual respect, and staff motivate and challenge learners to achieve and progress. Learning is frequently tested and individual support given as required.

54. The staff use their knowledge and experience effectively to inspire the learners and motivate them to achieve. The woodland rangers use anecdotes and examples to enrich the learning sessions and to embellish subject matter. Learners demonstrate their newly acquired skills and use these in woodland management projects to the benefit of the local community. They take pride in their work and talk knowledgeably about the project in which they have been involved. Generally, learning programmes are well resourced. There are sufficient numbers of experienced and suitably qualified staff to meet the learning and support needs of the learners. Specialist equipment, including ICT resources, fully support the learning programmes.

55. Many of the learning sessions are conducted in the woodland and the learners are provided with appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing. Health and safety are reinforced throughout learning. Classrooms and workshops have been built as part of the HHW project and demonstrate conservation principles in their design and structure. For example, walls are constructed from straw bales. The learners are involved in ongoing construction work to extend facilities and improve accommodation, and they respect and enjoy the learning environment.

56. All learners are initially assessed for literacy and numeracy skills, and social and personal needs as part of their induction programme. Personal needs and preferences are recorded and used to develop individual learning plans. The individual learning plans contain clearly identified learning goals and record targets for progression. Learners' progress is reviewed monthly at sessions with the senior ranger which the Connexions personal adviser also attends. Weekly staff meetings are held to review learners' progress and needs, to implement additional learning support and to provide advice and guidance as appropriate.

57. The overall level of support given to learners by the staff is very high. Staff often respond to the social and personal needs of learners. Examples include providing free lunches to a learner who didn't have enough money, providing transport for remotely located learners and giving early morning alarm calls to enable a learner to overcome erratic attendance. Staff demonstrate a caring attitude towards the learners and a sensitivity to their needs. Support is often provided by motivating and inspiring learners to help themselves to overcome difficulties, as well as by responding to immediate practical needs.

58. HHW has developed effective working partnerships with external support agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus, Connexions and the local Youth Offending Service as part of its overall arrangements for supporting learners. HHW works closely with local businesses to establish a register of work placements for learners. The employers are particularly

## HILL HOLT WOOD

supportive of the HHW project. Learners placed with them become engaged in interesting and challenging roles which widen their vocational experience. In two recent cases learners so impressed their work-placement providers that they have been offered full-time jobs. One learner now combines his employment as a motor mechanic with attending college as part of an apprenticeship. However, at present only eight employers provide work-experience opportunities. Of 72 starters on the E2E programme since August 2003, only 26 per cent have experienced work placement or tasters. This inadequacy is recognised by HHW's managers, who have put into place a strategy for increasing the number of employers on their register.

59. HHW has made innovative use of the woodland learning environment to capture the interest of the learners. Many of the learners have poor records of attendance and under achievement at school. They enjoy working outside and learning about the rural environment and acquiring new knowledge and skills. The programme is particularly suited to their needs and they see it as a contrast to their poor experiences at school. The HHW programme strongly supports the main learning objectives of the E2E learning framework by improving learners' motivation and confidence, developing their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, and developing their personal effectiveness within the project of creating a self-sustaining woodland. The experience of learners is being broadened and they are receiving a planned and well-structured programme containing a range of choices and enrichment activities which enable them to achieve and progress.

### **Leadership and management**

60. The training programme is well managed. The staff benefit from strong leadership and from being given clearly defined aims and objectives. They have a clear understanding of HHW's expectations for enabling learners to improve personal effectiveness and acquire the skills needed for employment. The staff work well together as a team and support each other in their collective ambition to support the learners. Frequent meetings between staff take place and staff feel that their contributions to HHW are valued by managers. The organisation is supportive of staff development and has made plans to enable four staff to achieve level 4 teaching qualifications during 2005.

61. HHW has adequate arrangements in place to provide a healthy and safe environment for working and learning. Thorough monitoring arrangements are in place for work-placement providers in respect of health and safety, and equality of opportunity. Procedures are in place to deal with grievances and complaints, and staff are particularly vigilant in dealing with instances of harassment and oppressive behaviour. The management information system is not fully utilised routinely. For example, HHW does not sufficiently use the management information systems to set targets for achieving qualifications based on learners' potentials. It does not make full use of data in action-planning for learning. The self-assessment report is detailed and comprehensive in its appraisal of provision. It is self-critical and provides an honest account. HHW has taken action to deal with some weaknesses it identified in its self-assessment report, and inspectors gave this area a higher grade than HHW gave itself.