

Short inspection of Hill Holt Wood

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 December 2024

Outcome

Hill Holt Wood continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

Hill Holt Wood is a registered social enterprise and charity situated in a 34-acre ancient woodland in Norton Disney, Lincolnshire. It was previously inspected on 15 to 17 May 2018.

At the time of the inspection, there were 48 learners aged 16 to 25. Around 30 have an education, health and care plan. Learners have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Just under half have autism, and many have previously been out of education for some time.

Learners attend vocational courses in small groups from entry level to level 2 in animal care, horticulture or woodcraft. At the time of the inspection, three-quarters of learners study horticulture or woodcraft. The remainder undertake animal care, eight at entry level and five at level 2. Most learners study functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics; just over half complete entry-level courses, and the rest study levels 1 or 2.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners study in small groups and benefit from extensive practical learning in a tranquil outdoor environment. This supports them to build their confidence and communication skills. It also helps learners to enjoy learning again.

Leaders frequently invest in the woodland site to enhance learners' experiences. For example, a newly acquired piece of land allows learners to participate in a large-scale removal of invasive species project. As a result of their studies, most learners gain valuable new knowledge and personal skills.

Learners benefit from a comprehensive careers programme. They attend several relevant activities, including one-to-one guidance, visits to colleges and employer talks. Learners know what their next steps are and how to take them.

Staff know well the wider risks their learners might face. They organise highly relevant safety talks, such as a visit to Sleaford police station, to teach learners

about the impact of knife crime. Learners know how to keep themselves safe. They readily ask staff for support and receive any help that they need.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

In the main, teachers and learning support rangers (LSRs) have the expertise to undertake their roles. Horticulture and woodcraft teachers use their experience to plan and teach their curriculums successfully. They know well what learners' individual needs and requirements are. Teachers and LSRs work together productively to provide learners with good support that enables them to participate in lessons.

Most teachers in woodcraft and horticulture capably use an array of suitable approaches in their teaching such as demonstrations, practical projects and individual tasks. For example, in woodcraft, teachers skilfully explain and show learners how to chamfer the edges of wood to specific angles. This provides them with a good level of understanding so they can swiftly attempt it themselves.

Leaders do not ensure that the very few learners who attend level 2 animal care study a sufficiently challenging curriculum. Learners spend too much time completing low-level tasks. They do not build their knowledge and skills to a high enough standard.

When undertaking practical work, learners benefit from close supervision and feedback from teachers and LSRs. This gives learners the confidence to practise their skills. For example, once entry-level horticulture learners master using hand tools, they capably complete challenging tasks such as erecting weave fencing.

Most learners produce high-quality practical work that they take great pride in. Their written work is mostly appropriate for the level at which they study. However, in a few cases, level 2 learners' written work standards vary too much. For example, learners list facts when they should explain or describe something in detail. Teachers do not always do enough to help learners improve these aspects of their written work.

Most learners achieve their vocational and entry-level functional English and mathematics qualifications. However, not enough learners who undertake functional skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2 gain them. Once learners complete their courses, the large majority progress to further study or employment.

Leaders accurately establish the main strengths and areas for development of their courses. In response, they take suitable actions to secure improvement. For example, they have made swift and sensible changes to how functional skills are taught this academic year. It is too soon for inspectors to judge the impact this may have on learners' achievement.

A recent change in the management team means that leaders' previously well-

established processes to monitor the quality of teaching were delayed. As a result, leaders do not have an up-to-date view of teachers' training and development needs. The newly appointed education manager has suitable plans to recommence their observation processes and associated training imminently.

The board of trustees, responsible for all aspects of the charity, has an appropriate focus on the quality of education. It has the relevant background and experience to undertake its role. Trustees use their experience well to support and challenge leaders to make improvements. They increase their focus on any areas for development. This assists leaders in making quick, and beneficial, changes to their provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the curriculum and teaching for the very small number of level 2 animal care learners so they develop the knowledge and skills they need.
- Ensure that all level 2 learners are supported to consistently produce written work that is of a high standard.
- Increase the number of learners who achieve levels 1 and 2 functional English and mathematics qualifications.

Provider details

Unique reference number	52210
Address	Hill Holt Wood Norton Disney Lincoln LN6 9JP
Contact number	01636 892836
Website	www.hillholtwood.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Steve Donagain
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 May 2018
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Hill Holt Wood was judged to be good in May 2018.

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive officer, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Emma Woods, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Vicki Locke

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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