

a special place for learning

# The Holly Lodge Centre Annual Education Report April 2024 - March 2025



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#### Introduction to The Holly Lodge Centre

The Holly Lodge Centre is a small local charity, hidden away on the site of an 18<sup>th</sup> century farm, in the heart of Richmond Park. We are a unique education centre and have been the learning partner for The Royal Parks in Richmond Park since 1994.

Whilst small, we are mighty, with over 7000 local children and adults visiting each year to learn about the wildlife and heritage of Richmond Park. The Centre was founded with the aim of increasing access for all to Richmond Park and specialises in working with children and adults with disabilities, providing bespoke sessions devised to meet their needs and allowing them to get up close to nature. All our facilities and teaching sessions are adapted for use by visitors with disabilities, and groups of all ages and abilities are welcome. Every learning session we offer can be tailored to meet the needs of children from specialist schools for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), both primary and secondary school age.

The Centre also provides interactive opportunities for all primary school children to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in science, geography and history and offers visitors close encounters with the diverse wildlife, flora and distinct heritage of the park.

We continue to hold the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

We have a small permanent staff team, which currently consists of the full time equivalent of 2.8 members of staff:

Alex Sharp, Centre Manager (Job share) Jaime Walsh, Centre Manager (Job share) Astrid Hilne, Education Centre Co-ordinator (full time) Lindsey Hamilton, Education Co-ordinator (part time) Nicky d'Offay, Education Co-ordinator (part-time) During the course of the year Pamela Brierley joined the team to support a number of key projects.

Our staff team are ably supported by a team of over 75 volunteers from the local community, who this year provided over 3,500 volunteering hours.

During this financial year, our education provision and bookings were at full capacity once again. This year we delivered a total of 301 workshops to over 7,400 learners. This included over 5,700 children and over 1,700 adults (including adults with learning disabilities, older people, carers, parents and teachers). This equated to a total of almost 15,000 learner hours.

We take feedback from every workshop that we deliver and our satisfaction rating for this year was 100% (this was from learners who reported their experience as having met or exceeded their expectations).



### Highlights

- Welcoming a new group, Kingston Refugee Action, to the Centre to participate in a special Halloween Nocturnal Animals session. The group were delighted by the session and we hope to build on the relationship with further holiday bookings.
- Holly Lodge Centre staff and volunteers benefited from a training and support workshop on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) delivered by teachers from <u>Paddock School</u>. The session focused on inclusive practices and effective communication strategies for students with autism and other complex needs, including the use of Makaton and visual communication aids.
- Building good relations with four schools from the Alton area of Roehampton and the community group that operates on the estate.
- Planning and delivering a refreshed set of Winter workshops as part of our Christmas activities, and engaging with community groups and SEND schools new and old.
- Planning and delivering our first Green Futures session with a Pupil Referral Unit, as part of a wider Royal Parks initiative.

#### 30<sup>th</sup> Anniverary 1994-2024

This year we were especially proud to celebrate the 30th anniversary of The Holly Lodge Centre together with over 100 invitees, past and present, joining us for the special day. Multiple generations of volunteers, staff, patrons and supporters came together to reconnect and share stories of the past and present, demonstrating the collective passion, creativity and commitment that has built the Centre into what it is today. After a picnic lunch and drinks, founding members of the Centre, Mike Fitt OBE, Dr. Pat Ealey and Malcolm Childs, shared stories and memories from the creation of the Centre and its early years. We were delighted to have some of our esteemed patrons taking part in the celebrations – Sir David Attenborough, Jacki Piper, Adrian Mills and Robert Holmes.

"Congratulations on this Anniversary. Since its inception in 1994, the Charity has developed brilliantly, in offering such a varied range of interests to all the visitors, especially the youngsters with special needs. Like an Acorn, may all its branches become a vintage Oak in this very special Royal Park". (Alex Mullholland, Friend of The Holly Lodge Centre who donated his entire Pharmacy to our service)



# Schools Programme

At The Holly Lodge Centre our school programme is delivered to both mainstream schools and specialist schools for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

In total we delivered 224 workshops to school groups in this financial year, to over 6,200 learners and 66 different schools. Classes travelled to the Centre from 14 different boroughs in London and the surrounding counties, with a particular increase from Surrey schools this year accessing our heritage sessions.

The table below details the variety of workshops delivered across the year.

Nature sessions	%	Heritage sessions	%
Art in Nature	13%	Art Reminiscence	13%
Birds	4%	Pills & Extracts	9%
Forest School	3%	Soap Workshop	5%
Frogs, Toads & Newts	2%	Then & Now	3%
Gardening	9%	Victorian Artefacts	1%
General Nature Trail	9%	Victorian Servants	9%
Invertebrates/Life Cycles	3%	Victorian School	35%
Living Things and Their	12%	WW1 in Richmond Park	9%
Habitats		WW2 in Richmond Park	16%
Mammals workshop	4%	Total	100%
Nocturnal Animals	2%		
Owl Babies	1%		
Plants	8%		
Pond Dipping	3%		
Sustainability	2%		
Winter Activities	12%		
Other/misc	13%		
Total	100%		

## Workshops 2024 - 2025



During the course of the year we have undertaken a number of supporting internal activities strengthening and refining our School Programme. These include:

- Reviewing content of individual lesson plans, refreshing lesson planning documentation and updating plans.
- Increasing our Early Years Foundation Stage offer for our youngest visitors.
- Recruiting new volunteers and delivering training sessions to support new and existing education volunteers.
- Developing social stories to support visits by specialist schools. These pictoral short narratives help individuals with additional needs to understand and navigate their visit in advance of attending.

## **Specialist SEND Schools**

This year we have built stronger relationships with our specialist schools, receiving a number of new classes from existing schools, more repeat visits, and expanded access into new sessions for pupils. For example, we have a longstanding relationship with Paddock School who typically participate exclusively in our gardening programme. Through building on this established relationship, Paddock pupils have gone on to access Winter Activity and nature trail sessions for the first time this year. Holly Lodge Centre staff and volunteers have also benefitted from bespoke SEND training delivered by Paddock School staff. Our relationship with Strathmore school has also been enhanced, with new classes accessing our sessions, and Holly Lodge Centre staff benefitting from a school tour to visit children in their own learning environment and benefit from the exchange of ideas and understanding that such visits bring.

As part of an ongoing expansion of our SEND secondary school provision, this year we successfully re-engaged Green Corridor, a post-16 Specialist Education Provider for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), aged 16-25 with Special Educational Needs (SEN). As a unique provision for young people into early adulthood, the education provider really embraced the Holly Lodge Centre offer and have benefitted from visits in each of the seasons.



#### Winter workshops

For the last week of November and throughout December, we welcomed 134 children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities to our Centre for a series of wonderful winter and festive workshops. These workshops cater for young people with a wide range of needs, including speech, language and communication difficulties, visual impairments and severe health conditions.













Our workshops are bespoke, and we adapt them to suit the needs of the group, so that all who visit can access the activities in a meaningful way. Our activities are sensory based, visitors might feel the ice, taste the gingerbread, listen to sleigh bells, see the wooden reindeer, smell the Christmas tree and more! This year, we adapted our Victorian classroom foyer to create a sensory area with twinkling lights, cushions and sensory toys – providing a space for anyone that needed a little time to relax and regulate away from the group – we received a lot of positive feedback about this addition.

On the nature trail were woodland reindeer sculptures, sensory activities and nature themed crafts. Many of our visitors use wheelchairs, buggies and walking aids so our accessible paths are an absolute must so that they can all explore our outside space and feel the calm and beauty of the nature that surrounds them.

We are pleased to say that the Winter workshops programme has helped to springboard a number of new relations with groups and schools, which have gone on to bear further fruit in additional bookings and nature trail sessions.

We are grateful to The National Lottery Community Fund for their support which enabled us to develop a new programme for 2024 and to purchase a range of sensory resources.

#### Quotes from some of the workshops:

"Thank you to you and your team for making our visit a great morning yesterday! We really enjoyed all the activities. I loved the new breakout room you have created – it is perfect for our learners. One learner with Down Syndrome felt so happy and content in a way we haven't seen before". (Strathmore School, Winter Activities workshop)

"The children loved it! We'll be back. One student who really struggles to regulate her emotions and can find unpredictable situations upsetting was so calm, smiling and engaged for the entire trip. It's such a lovely calming atmosphere". (St Ann's School, Winter Activities workshops)

#### **Gardening Group**





On Friday mornings during April-July and again from October to November we welcome sixth form pupils from a local school for pupils with severe learning disabilities (SLD), to join us for gardening sessions. The pupils sow, tend and harvest produce which they then take back to school for use in their pupil run café. Working alongside staff from the school to adapt our delivery to reflect the pupils individual learning goals, we observe some fantastic developments and changes in pupils who grow in confidence and ability, benefitting from the outside learning environment and consistency offered by The Holly Lodge Centre and our wonderful gardening volunteers.









#### **SEND Outdoor workshops**

Tennyson Grange continued to visit our Centre throughout the year and we expanded our offers to them. We tailored specific workshops for their interests. One of these being the WW2 workshop that was originally designed for school-age children. We altered this workshop to focus on reminiscence and delivered this to two separate groups from Tennyson Grange. The participants interacted with artefacts that triggered positive memories that they shared with the group. Tennyson Grange have booked six more workshops with us for the near future.

#### Work experience pilot

For an eight-week period this year we welcomed a young man in Year 12 from St Boscoes College to undertake work experience. With typical traits of Autism and profound Dyspraxia this young man started quiet and unsure, but with the support of our maintenance team he built his confidence and abilities, undertaking tasks independently by the end of his time with us and particularly enjoying checking and managing the bird feeders. The feedback from his family and teacher was overwhelmingly positive and we hope to be in a position to provide a similar offer in the future.

#### **Mainstream schools**

Sessions for mainstream schools account for approximately 50% of our overall delivery. We are honored to have such longstanding relationships with many schools in the area, some of whom have been coming to us for 20 years. This year we welcomed a number of new schools, supported by specialist funding, welcoming both those nearby and further afield for the first time. This included two mainstream secondary schools and we worked extensively with a specialist Pupil Referral Unit.

#### Supported access for pupils from areas of deprivation

The Holly Lodge Centre is pleased to be supported by The Royal Parks Bursary scheme, enabling schools with a Pupil Premium of over 30% to benefit from free sessions. This year we supported eight schools to access 26 sessions, supporting over 400 learners to benefit from the opportunity to develop skills through outdoor based learning. We received ratings of 5/5 stars across the board for the sessions overall, being well led and organised, developing skills and knowledge, and contributing to personal and social wellbeing.



We are particularly proud to have developed relations with The Alton Estate, an area right next to the park, situated by Roehampton Gate. It is one of the most deprived areas in the borough, and nationally, and we have been developing relationships with schools in the area in order to ensure more children can benefit from the amazing park resource right on their doorstep. Through our bursary scheme, one such school - The Alton School - visited 3 times, taking part in World War I, World War II and Habitat sessions. We also welcomed other schools from the area and worked with Help Nature Thrive to deliver a Bug Hotel building workshop within the community. We hope that this engagement is the start of a longer-term relationship with the area, it's pupils and families.

Whilst a number of schools benefit from our Royal Parks Bursary scheme, this year we were grateful to receive funding from the Wates Foundation to specifically focus on reaching new schools. This funding supported both new mainstream schools from areas of deprivation, and new specialist schools. Through the programme we have welcomed 3 new schools to date, including nearby Roehampton Church School for the very first time.

#### Quotes

"The team were well organised and the children were engaged throughout. The team were very knowledgeable and able to teach the children at their own pace. The children really enjoyed the mini beast hunting with the logs". (The Alton School, Living Things and their habitats session)

"This is just like being in WW2!". (Heathmere Primary School, WWII)

"One of the best trips we have been on. The children absolutely loved yesterday, they came back saying how great it was and even this morning they were still speaking about it". (Mosaic Jewish Primary School, Victorian School)

#### **Transport Bursaries**

To ensure schools with limited funding can reach the Holly Lodge Centre in our somewhat remote location, The Royal Parks and other supporting funders enable the Holly Lodge Centre to maintain a transport bursary. This year, free transport was offered to schools with a Pupil Premium of over 30% with each school having access to up to £500 to support increasingly inhibitive coach hire costs. Eight schools benefitted enabling over 180 children to participate in workshop sessions. The Holly Lodge Centre sees an increasing need around supporting transport costs, year on year, and we hope to continue to support schools serving some of the most deprived communities to access Richmond Park, it's nature and heritage, through this scheme.



#### **Forest school**

This Autumn, we once again welcomed students from L'École de Battersea to take part in our Forest School program. It was wonderful to introduce the children to our Nature Trail, which they quickly made their own by moulding mischievous Forest Trolls from clay, creating custom bunting through leaf pounding and building extraordinary dens. Themes ranged from Den Building to Superworms to Magic to Plants, with a flow of immersive activities and play in support.

#### Syon Park Countryside Day

On a bright and beautiful Monday in May, a team of volunteers and staff from the Holly Lodge Centre set up shop for the day at the historic and grand estate of Syon Park. Organized by Countryside Learning and Syon Park, we participated in their Countryside Classroom Day where we met with over 320 students from 10 different classes and taught them all about the importance of wildflower meadows.

#### Junior Citizens programme

We also hosted the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Junior Citizen programme, which works to reduce child deaths and educates Year 6 pupils on Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), safe road crossing, using public transport and much more. Over 1300 pupils visit our site over a two-week period to participate in safety scenarios and training.

#### Secondary schools

Developing our mainstream secondary school provision, this year we delivered a popular Careers Day session for pupils from Grey Court Secondary School interested in pursuing careers in the outdoors. Approximately 25 pupils attended to hear about the learning and career path of Paul Richards, Richmond Park Manager, and Holly Lodge Centre staff. Pupils then participated in an array of activities on our nature trail including habitat conservation, and species classification and documentation.

We also provided the setting for St Paul's Boys School Geography coursework fieldtrip. Over a two day period, The Holly Lodge Centre supported over 120 boys to complete field work and participate in some fun activities including pond dipping and log rolling.





### **Pupil Referral Units**

This year we delivered 15 sessions to Malden Oaks Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Malden Oaks is a specialist and innovative Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) provision for up to 150 Kingston and Richmond students aged 11-19 who benefit from an alternative approach to mainstream education. They attended the Holly Lodge Centre in very small groups, with just single pupils on occasion, ensuring each pupil's unique needs could be fully met. Further enhancing our offer to Malden Oaks, this year we supported an important phase of The Royal Parks Green Futures initiative, in Richmond Park. We were joined by pupils from Malden Oaks who learnt about the important role of caring for the park in combating climate change, how valuable our volunteer force is, and about future careers in green spaces. After an hour of bramble taming, we are looking forward to our next sessions in April and June 2025, as this important project moves into the final stage of delivery.

## **Community programme**

Community engagement is at the core of the work that we do at the Holly Lodge Centre, reaching out to ensure access to Richmond Park for all. Our community programme consists of sessions delivered during the school holidays to children and family focussed community groups and charities, and those delivered to adult disability groups, and the elderly. Our provision in this area focuses on supporting disability and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

#### Holiday programmes

In the school holidays we worked with local organisations to bring children who wouldn't have the chance to visit Richmond Park, into the Centre for activity days.

During the Easter and the Summer holidays we welcomed families from Skylarks Charity. This Richmond upon Thames based organisation provides invaluable support to children with disabilities and additional needs, as well as their siblings, parents and carers. We ran a number of "free-flow sessions" on our nature trail, allowing families to explore at their own pace, engaging in a variety of self-led and volunteer-supported activities.

In August, we welcomed charity groups from Richmond Young Carers, Kingston Young Carers and Brentford Football Club Young Carers. Young Carers are children (aged 5-18) who care for others who are dependent on them because of a physical disability, learning difficulty, mental health problems, age or illness.



Our specially designed workshops cater to young carers of all ages, providing a variety of engaging and enriching experiences. From exploring enchanting pond life to creating whimsical clay tree faces and spinning sycamore seed helicopters, our activities are designed to foster creativity, teamwork, a deep connection with nature and much needed respite for these young people. The positive impact of these nature-based activities on young carers is profound. Studies have shown that spending time in nature can reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance overall well-being. At The Holly Lodge Centre, we witness first-hand the transformative power of these experiences.

In October half-term the Holly Lodge Centre hosted a group of children and their families from Refugee Action Group Kingston. We welcomed the group to the Centre to take part in a Nocturnal Animals session and the children spent an engaging morning on the Nature Trail, using their five senses to understand how nocturnal animals navigate the world at night, including having a go at digging for worms in the dark. They also learned about the evidence nocturnal animals leave on our nature trail, in the form of paw prints and animal poo, with the opportunity to make their own, always a hit with the younger ones!

This year our holidays programmes were also enjoyed by Activity Station, Knots Arts, Happy Holiday Hub, an informal grouping of families with children with disabilities, and a Beavers group who enjoyed the opportunity to complete their badge work on local creatures and pond dipping.

#### Quotes

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you for the wonderful day at Holly Lodge yesterday. It surpassed all our expectations and was unanimously voted the best trip yet. The refugee families were extremely happy to be outside and the children loved the range of activities. I was so impressed with all the learning aids and the interactive/explore approach that you embedded in everything. Thank you all too for your kindness and patience. It made the families feel very comfortable and wanted". (Refugee Action, Nocturnal Animals session)

"We have loved the outdoor session, so much to do and such a lovely, supportive atmosphere. I really appreciate the thought put into everything and the range of activities. Thank you for including our son's older sibling. It's great we can all come together as a family. It's a very special place". (Skylarks, Holiday session)





#### **Adults**

Our community programme extends to supporting the vulnerable and elderly and adults with a range of learning and other disabilities.

This year we continued to run our weekly Art Group for adults with disabilities which takes place throughout the year. We welcomed some new participants this year who joined the group, using nature as a creative starting point, to create 2D and 3D artworks, which continue to decorate the walls of the Holly Lodge Centre.

We continued our relationship with FiSH – an elderly community group – by delivering our six-month Art Reminiscence programme, funded by Help Nature Thrive. The sessions were designed for older people with early-stage dementia who are living in our local community. The group visited once a month for 6 months and took part in seasonally focused nature-based art tasks.

During the festive season, we welcomed elderly individuals with dementia from local care homes and community groups to a magical Victorian Christmas experience.

A part of our wider Winter Activities Programme funded by The National Lottery, our Victorian classroom was transformed into a captivating, atmospheric space, adorned with candlelight, holly, ivy, a twinkling tree, paper chains, knitted stockings and more. Participants were immersed in the traditions of a bygone era, learning about the origins of Christmas cards and crackers. The room was further enlivened by the creation of fragrant, natural wreaths and orange pomanders.



Our Adult Community Programme also delivered bespoke sessions for the following adult and elderly groups this year:

- Evergreens Church Group
- Greenwood Community Centre
- Mortlake Community Association
- Richmond Borough Mind
- Richmond Good Neighbours
- Roehampton Community Group
- Seeability
- Teddington Voluntary Care Group
- Tennyson Grange Care Home

"This workshop is super sensory, engaging our residents on multiple levels. The pantomime was a fantastic way to involve everyone and foster teamwork. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the dedicated volunteers who made these sessions possible and created such a wonderful experience for all who attended". (Tennyson Grange, Victorian Christmas)





# Public programme

During the year we held 3 public drop in events aimed at families, at different venues within Richmond Park – in total 252 learners (147 children and 105 adults). We joined forces with The Royal Parks Help Nature Thrive team and the Friends of Richmond Park for each event.

#### Park activities/drop in days

On a sunny Tuesday and Wednesday in August, The Holly Lodge Centre partnered with The Royal Parks, Help Nature Thrive team to host a Nature Roadshow and a Public Engagement day in Richmond Park. The Roehampton Gate Gardens and Pen Ponds were transformed into a hands-on exploration of the park's nocturnal wonders. Attracting over 250 curious visitors, we aimed to educate visitors about the fascinating world that emerges after dark and nocturnal animal's extraordinary senses and challenged our visitors to test their own sight, smell, touch and hearing. This free popup event was a hit with the families who dropped by as there really was something for everyone to engage with and enjoy.

We also joined Help Nature Thrive for a similar pop-up event during the Easter holidays and teamed up for a Bug Hotel community development session, which was held in the Alton Estate just outside of the park, near Roehampton Gate.





# Other events and highlights from the year

In addition to our education delivery, The Holly Lodge Centre undertakes a variety of internal activities and fundraising events throughout the year. Some highlights from this year include:

- Celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an event in September 2024
- Welcoming two new trustees, Fiona Fong and Harriet Parker in January 2025
- Delivering six popular fundraising events raising funds for the Charity
- Chair, James Middlehurst and family completing the London Ride Bike Challenge and Richmond Park Marathon in support of the Centre
- Staff and volunteers attending the Kings Garden Party at Buckingham Palace
- Consulting extensively with volunteers supporting further enhancements to education sessions and lesson plans
- Developing a programme of volunteer consultation, training and socials to support our vital Holly Lodge Centre volunteer family and their role at the Centre
- Testing a new Wassail event which we aim to roll out as a family day in 2025/26
- Staff and volunteers supporting the Richmond Hill Open Gardens event, raising funds for both The Holly Lodge Centre and Richmond Good Neighbours





#### Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

#### **Requests from the Royal Parks**

We would like to request access to training from The Royal Parks. Whether it be Health & Safety, Plant and Species identification or Safeguarding, access to a broad range of statutory and other training opportunity via The Royal Parks, specialist departments or online training platforms, would make a huge difference to us as a small charity.

#### Plans 2025/26

During 2025/26 The Holly Lodge Centre will move into temporary facilities to accommodate building and refurbishment works. Whilst this represents a time of upheaval and change, we look forward to continuing to develop and deliver our sessions from adapted locations and coming back to refreshed and revitalised spaces in Autumn 2025.

#### The year ahead will also see:

- Delivery of the final stage of Green Futures sessions in Richmond Park and working with partners to develop a legacy from the project.
- Development of our Gardening programme and sessions that increase use of our Kitchen Garden
- Continuation of schemes to support more deprived schools and SEND schools and groups to access through school and transport bursaries.
- Work to enhance our outside spaces for visitors with more profound and severe learning needs





## Appendix

AR:	APRIL 2024 - MARCH 2025		
		APR 24 - MAR 25	
Ref	TRP KPIs	TOTAL	
	SUMMARY:	10111	
A	N of Learner visits	7477	
В	N of Learner hours	14954	
С	Percentage of Learner satisfaction	100%	
D	Learners visits benefitting from free or discounted activities and bursaries	1268	
REF	ANNUAL DELIVERY STATS	TOTAL	
1	N of Learner visits (across all programmes):	7477	
	N of children	5705	
	N of adults	1772	
2	N of sessions / activities delivered	301	
3	N of free or discounted sessions/activities delivered	85	
	Schools programme		
	Mainstream:		
4	N of Learner visits:	5560	
	N of children	4877	
_	N of adults	683	
5	N of school sessions delivered:	168	
	N of Primary school sessions	150	
	N of Secondary school sessions	18	
6	N of state schools and N of private schools (if available)	138 (state) 30 (private)	
7	N of free bursary / discounted sessions delivered	24	
	School projects / SEND specialism (if relevant)		
8	N of Learner visits:	713	
	N of children	413	
	N of adults	300	
9	N of school sessions delivered:	56	
	N of Primary school sessions	14	
	N of Secondary school sessions	42	
10	N of free bursary / discounted sessions delivered	41	
	Community and Public Programme		
	Family programme:		
11	N of Learner visits:	418	
	N of children	244	
	N of adults	174	
12	N of activities / events delivered	6	
13	N of free bursary / discounted activities delivered	2	
1.4	Adult programme:		
14	N of Learner visits:	442	
	N of children	4	
	N of adults	438	
15	N of activities / events delivered	47	
16	N of free / discounted activities	10	
	Community Programme / Other:		
17	N of Learner visits:	344	
	N of children	167	
	N of adults	177	
18	N of activities / events delivered	24	

