

Academy Education Limited

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Academy Education carries out apprenticeship training in hairdressing from a purpose designed training academy near Oxford Street in central London. It is a family-run business with a commercial training history dating back to 1971. It has delivered work-based learning to London salons since 1996. At the time of the last inspection, all learners were on intermediate apprenticeships. Academy Education contracts with the Skills Funding Agency. Currently 134 hairdressing apprentices are on programme.

Academy Education was last inspected in January 2010 when the overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision, and leadership and management were all judged to be satisfactory. The single subject area inspected, hairdressing, was judged to be satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the provision has expanded to include advanced apprenticeships and a new training academy has recently opened in Ipswich. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has Academy Education made in improving self-assessment and quality improvement planning in order to strengthen its provision?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection, the self-assessment process was judged satisfactory, although the quality improvement plan was not sufficiently clear to monitor progress. Academy Education has made insufficient progress in improving self-assessment and quality improvement planning. Strengths, as stated in the self-assessment report, are too focused on processes rather than on the impact on the learners' experience. The quality improvement plan does not link well to the key findings of the self-assessment report and actions to improve are not sufficiently clear as to what success would look like if they are to be achieved. It is not clear how the provider has included the recommendations to improve, from the previous inspection report, into the quality improvement process. Those grades included in the self-assessment report, which are higher than those at inspection, are not supported by sufficient quantifiable evidence to justify them. The use of learners' and employers' feedback to improve provision, as in the previous inspection, continues to be too informal.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving overall success rates and success rates within planned timescales? **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection, overall success rates for hairdressing apprenticeships were just below the national average for hairdressing but were judged satisfactory. Overall success rates in 2010/11 have improved by four percentage points and are now above the national average for hairdressing. The figures held by the provider for current success of leavers during 2011/12 indicate that success rates are continuing to rise. They compare well to the national average for hairdressing and are two percentage points higher than the national average for all apprenticeships in 2010/11. Academy Education has also made further progress with improving success rates within planned timescales in 2010/11. These have risen by one percentage point and are now three percentage points above the national average for hairdressing.

During this year, Academy Education has improved its use of data to analyse reasons for leavers not completing their programme. This includes analysis of basic skills test results to establish any correlation with leaving early. It also involves contacting leavers and their employers to check and analyse reasons for leaving and identify any recurring reasons that could be addressed.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in ensuring that all learners receive at least three reviews per year in their own salons, with discussions that include the learner and the employer? **Insufficient progress**

At the previous inspection the provider did not carry out visits and reviews in the employers' salons as regularly as planned. This is still the case and not all learners are receiving at least three progress reviews in the workplace annually, which include the learner and employer. Employers do receive written reports on the progress of their learners following attendance at the academy. They find these useful, but the reports do not effectively bring together the targets for both training at the academy and within the workplace. Reviews of learners' progress take place while they are attending the academy every five weeks.

What progress has been made in introducing assessment in the workplace to improve learners' and employers' involvement and increase the opportunities for early assessment? **Insufficient progress**

At the previous inspection, assessment practice was judged satisfactory, although there was no option to include the work of learners in the workplace as part of the assessment process, and this remains the case. Employers have insufficient knowledge of the training planned by the provider at the academy. Assessment is

not sufficiently linked to the learner's competence in the workplace. The in-house training learners experience in the workplace is not used to plan each learner's training. The provider appropriately recognises the developing skills of some learners at the academy, and early assessment takes place that enables them to complete before their planned time.

What progress has been made in developing progression routes for apprentices beyond the intermediate apprenticeship?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, the provider offered intermediate apprenticeships in hairdressing and barbering with no progression route available to advanced qualifications, although some learners continued to attend the academy to develop more advanced skills. From July 2010, following promotional work with employers and apprentices, the provider successfully introduced advanced apprenticeships in hairdressing and barbering. At the time of the monitoring visit, 27 learners were enrolled as advanced apprentices, with good retention of those learners. One learner has successfully completed the training and those learners still on programme are making at least satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in improving employers' and learners' awareness of equality and diversity?

Reasonable progress

The promotion of equality and diversity was judged satisfactory at the previous inspection. Academy Education has revised and updated training materials used to promote equality and diversity at induction that provides an attractive and informative electronic presentation to support group discussions. Staff place clear expectations on learners regarding the way in which they are required to conduct themselves at work and at the academy. The provider has improved the coverage of areas such as direct and indirect discrimination. A bank of questions, previously used during reviews to explore learners' understanding of equality and diversity, has been extended to include bullying and harassment. Staff are able to relate instances learners have encountered within the training centre and tested their understanding with different clients and appropriate responses. However, these are naturally occurring rather than planned examples, so not all learners have the chance to show an application of their understanding. Some 15% of current learners are men, which is good when compared to the average number of men employed in the industry.

Academy Education has improved its focus on employers' awareness of equality and diversity as a part of the initial sign-up process for a partner salon. However, as not all employers are currently involved in reviews, they remain unaware of equality and diversity topics discussed with learners.

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