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Ms Eleanore Gray
Training Manager
Leslie Frances Training Ltd
58 Eldon Street
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Dear Ms Gray

Short inspection of Leslie Frances Training Ltd

Following the short inspection on 18–19 October 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in September 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Since your previous inspection, leaders and managers have worked effectively to ensure that your staff continue to offer a good standard of training and education for young people. Managers have successfully addressed many of the recommendations made at the previous inspection.

You have a dedicated and skilled workforce, with substantial industrial expertise. Many members of your team have been with the organisation for a significant period of time. You maintain strong links with the commercial sector in the region. Salon proprietors in the area, many of whom trained with your company, recognise the high quality of training that the organisation provides to the apprentices placed at their salons. They benefit significantly from the responsiveness your staff are to their commercial needs, and the speed with which their apprentices develop their expertise. As a result, on completion of their qualifications, many apprentices remain with the placement employer, gain promotion or progress to higher-level qualifications. Others move to more senior roles with other employers, or progress to become successful freelancers.

Your apprentices are confident and committed to their chosen training programme. They receive helpful guidance prior to starting their apprenticeships. They recognise the good progress that they are making and the high quality of support that they receive from assessors.

In recent years, managers have been particularly successful at designing suitable methods of supporting apprentices to acquire the appropriate English and/or mathematics qualifications as part of their apprenticeships.

While the size and scope of your provision have remained relatively stable, you and your managers have started to introduce the new apprenticeship standards. You and your team are working hard to ensure that these significant changes do not have a detrimental effect on the quality of provision.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding remains a priority for the organisation. Suitable policies and procedures are in place to ensure safe staff recruitment processes. Appropriate security measures are in place to help keep apprentices and employers safe in the main salons and training facilities. Each apprentice completes a thorough risk assessment in their workplace when they start their apprenticeship, supported by their employer. This approach helps both the employer and the apprentices to recognise and understand the possible risks associated with working in a salon environment, and to maintain good standards of health and safety. Managers have in place suitable induction and teaching activities to ensure that apprentices are aware of a wide range of themes, including accident prevention, fire safety and evacuation. Apprentices know what actions to take if they feel at risk from extremism or radicalisation, and whom to approach if they are concerned about safeguarding issues. Managers deal well with any safeguarding-related concerns if they arise.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have successfully maintained the high quality of training that apprentices receive. All staff work hard to recruit apprentices who demonstrate a genuine interest in, and understanding of, the sector. Managers have extensive first-hand experience of working in the industry. They engage employers fully at all stages of the training process. This includes recruitment and selection, induction, target setting and review. Apprentices carry out their training in high-quality commercial and training salons. Managers ensure that the training fully prepares apprentices for careers in the industry once they complete their apprenticeship. Teaching staff are involved actively in consultations around the introduction of the new apprenticeship standards. This enables all staff to ensure a smooth transition to the new qualification. Managers have not yet fully briefed employers on the differences between the existing apprenticeship framework and the new standards.
- Since the previous inspection, the proportion of apprentices who successfully achieve their apprenticeship has remained generally high. The large majority achieve within the planned timescale. In 2017, there was a slight increase in the number of apprentices who withdrew from the programme prematurely, leading to a slight dip in achievement rates. Managers have carried out a detailed analysis of what led to this drop in retention, and put in place a range of strategies to reverse the decline. In particular, they have increased the focus on

tracking apprentices' progress, identifying those at greater risk of withdrawing, and providing additional support and guidance. For example, they have established additional support for apprentices who require help with basic financial management.

- Managers have reviewed thoroughly the target-setting and review processes, which were weak at the previous inspection. These processes are now detailed and effective. Teachers have high expectations of apprentices. All reviews fully involve apprentices, teachers and employers. This three-way partnership has an extremely positive influence on the pace of learning of the apprentices. Apprentices are confident and competent, and demonstrate very good skills development.
- All staff help to ensure that apprentices have a particularly good understanding of equality, diversity and British values. Apprentices recognise and appreciate the local multicultural and multi-ethnic environments in which they live and work. Apprentices particularly enjoy and value opportunities in tutorials to explore and discuss these themes. These sessions help to broaden their understanding. Apprentices are able to articulate how cultural differences or the physical disabilities of clients might have an impact on salon practice. For example, apprentices were able to ensure that a deaf client received a high-quality service during her visit to the salon.
- Managers are particularly effective at supporting apprentices to develop their literacy and numeracy skills as part of their apprenticeship. Apprentices enjoy their English and mathematics theory sessions. The large majority of apprentices who are required to take functional skills English and/or mathematics successfully pass the tests first time. Apprentices communicate clearly and confidently with staff and clients. On occasions, assessors do not provide helpful enough feedback to apprentices to help them correct their spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is often because a few staff are less confident about their own skills in this area.
- Since the previous inspection, managers have focused on how they can improve the impact of the lesson observation process. Observations are now thorough, and help managers identify suitable development priorities for staff. Managers have also developed valuable opportunities to enable teachers to learn from each other by, for example, discussing and sharing good practice in team meetings, peer mentoring and team teaching. As a result, teachers are clear about what they need to do to improve the quality of their teaching, and they work with increasing confidence.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff continue to focus on suitable strategies to reverse the recent dip in achievement rates; in particular, staff should:
 - ensure that all new recruits clearly demonstrate a proven interest in the profession before assessors enrol them on the programme
 - identify any apprentices at risk of withdrawing from the programme and

provide suitable support to maximise their chances of success

- staff provide more helpful feedback on written work to support apprentices in improving their spelling, punctuation and grammar
- managers support staff to increase their self-confidence with their own literacy skills
- managers make employers fully aware of the implications of apprentices moving from frameworks to the new standards.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will also be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Nelson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors visited the provider for two days. The lead internal quality assurance assessor, as nominee, assisted inspectors. Inspectors met with senior directors and a number of key senior leaders and managers, as well as with a number of tutors and trainers/assessors. They also met a range of apprentices and spoke to employers. Inspectors visited several salons in Barnsley and Sheffield and met with apprentices. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment, and reviewed apprentices' written work and lesson planning documentation. They reviewed important policies and documents, including those related to self-assessment, quality improvement, performance management and safeguarding. They also considered the views of apprentices and employers.