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Mrs Lesley Ellis
Managing Director
Inter Training Services Limited
2 London Road
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Dear Mrs Ellis

Short inspection of Inter Training Services Limited (ITS)

Following the short inspection on 24–25 January 2018, 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 good in July 2014.

This provider continues to be good.

You and your staff continue to provide apprentices with high-quality training. Relationships with employers are exceptionally strong and productive. Apprentices benefit from these relationships in a number of ways. First, they experience high-quality training in very well-equipped and often sector-leading salons. Second, they enjoy very good support from salon and ITS assessors, who help them develop advanced hairdressing skills that employers value. Third, apprentices make good progress in their qualifications, and a large number of those who achieve their intermediate apprenticeships go on to advanced apprenticeships.

During 2015/16 and again in the first half of 2016/17, achievement rates for 16- to 18-year-old intermediate apprentices declined sharply. You correctly identified that younger apprentices were not staying until the end of their programmes and not achieving their qualifications. You have taken decisive action and reversed the downward trend in achievement for this group. Younger apprentices now stay in training, and achievements are rising rapidly towards their former high rates.

Safeguarding is effective.

Apprentices are safe in their workplaces. They receive good guidance from employers and from assessors about the need to protect themselves, their clients and others from harm in the workplace or in training. Almost all have a very good understanding of the dangers to health from dyes, bleaches and other chemicals

used in the industry. During off-the-job training, ITS staff provide apprentices with clear guidance about safe cutting, good hygiene practices and the importance of good posture when standing for long periods in salons. Assessors are knowledgeable about safeguarding and are confident in discussing safeguarding topics in detail with apprentices. They challenge preconceptions and stereotypes. Employers reinforce these messages and help apprentices to work safely. You brief new employers well about the need to support and safeguard apprentices.

The vast majority of apprentices have a good understanding of the potential dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices develop their knowledge when they discuss with assessors news items that have relevance to safeguarding, British values and other related topics. Apprentices are confident that they can identify changes of behaviour that might signal radicalisation in a colleague or acquaintance.

Inspection findings

- You and your managers took decisive action during 2016/17 to deal with declining achievement rates for 16- to 18-year-old intermediate apprentices. You recognised that in recent years too many younger apprentices were leaving before the end of their training. You consulted widely with employers and former apprentices to understand what caused apprentices to leave early. With employers' support, you introduced a three-month paid work-experience period for younger apprentices before they start training. This gives them a good understanding of daily salon duties and employers' expectations. As a result, apprentices now enter training with a realistic understanding of working life. All apprentices who started since the introduction of this initiative have remained in training. Achievement rates for 16- to 18-year-old intermediate apprentices have risen rapidly, and significantly, across the past year. Achievement rates for adult intermediate apprentices and all advanced apprentices are high.
- Trainers and assessors make good use of the information they have about learners' existing skills and achievements. They use this information well to plan programmes on which apprentices make good progress. Assessors and employers use digital communications very successfully to set, communicate and monitor targets and progress. Staff quickly identify and meet learning support needs. Assessors and learning support tutors have very close working relationships with apprentices and their employers, and they tailor one-to-one support appropriately. Apprentices benefit from good buddying and mentoring arrangements where there is more than one apprentice in a salon.
- Managers and staff have made good progress since the previous inspection in moving from quality control processes to more effective quality improvement arrangements. Self-assessment reporting is comprehensive and identifies strengths and weaknesses accurately. You develop the annual self-assessment report after extensive discussion with staff and employers. Staff take good account of learners' and employers' comments when planning training. Employers contribute well to discussions about training quality and are fully involved in planning for improvements.
- The vast majority of apprentices remain in the industry after they finish their

training. Many achieve promotions and positions of increased responsibility in their salons. A high proportion of intermediate apprentices go on to enrol as advanced apprentices. Many advanced apprentices go on to take Training, Assessment and Quality Assurance awards at level 3, so that they can become in-salon assessors or take up quality assurance roles. Assessors provide good information and guidance about these routes and opportunities. Employers act as very good role models for apprentices, and a growing number of salon owners or salon group owners were apprentices with ITS. Many intermediate apprentices work to the standards expected at advanced level. However, a small number of intermediate apprentices, especially those in smaller salons, would rightly value the chance to be more adventurous in their work.

- Apprentices appreciate the importance of English and mathematics skills and understand the relevance of these in their jobs. They display good communication and numeracy skills. They hold clear and coherent conversations with clients and employers and calculate angles of cuts, proportions of colours and timings of appointments accurately. Assessors and learning support staff provide good-quality feedback on written work that identifies strengths and weaknesses in sentence structure and style, as well as spelling and grammar. Staff work successfully to improve the skills of those who already have English and mathematics qualifications at level 2.
- Staff give potential apprentices good-quality advice and guidance about career routes available to them. During level-2 training, apprentices are encouraged to progress to advanced apprenticeships, and the majority do so. Staff give clear advice to applicants whom they feel to be unsuited to a career in hairdressing, directing them to local colleges or to other providers as appropriate. When applicants may be suited to hairdressing but require more intensive training than a salon-based apprenticeship will provide, staff direct them to local college courses.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders should make sure that achievement rates for:

- 16- to 18-year-old intermediate apprentices continue to rise
- adult intermediate apprentices, and advanced apprentices of all ages, remain at high levels.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Beynon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector carried out the inspection at short notice, assisted by the managing director as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's self-assessment report and quality improvement plan, and the previous inspection report. They also used data on apprentices' achievements to help them make judgements. Inspectors interviewed staff, learners and employers, and observed assessments and progress reviews.