

Escala Training Academy

Independent Learning Provider

Inspection dates

28 to 30 November 2018

Overall effectiveness		Good	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected	

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- As a result of good teaching and support, current learners are making good progress. Staff took effective action to recover the drop in achievement rates in 2016/17 and they are now high.
- The proportion of learners who gain employment or promotion following their training is high.
- Learners develop good practical skills in beauty therapy and nail services, and the standard of their work is high.
- Staff work effectively with learners to create a shared culture of high ambition and expectations.
- The chief executive focuses well on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The chief executive works with local employers to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of learners and helps them develop skills that are in demand in the region.
- Learners benefit from additional coaching on professional standards in the industry and develop additional employability skills.
- Teachers work with learners to set and achieve targets that match closely the needs of each learner.
- Teachers help learners to develop the essential skills in English and mathematics needed for their qualifications. However, staff do not help learners, especially the most able, to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, or to gain additional qualifications in English and mathematics.
- In a few cases, teachers do not check in sufficient detail that learners have developed a good understanding of the topics being taught.
- Learners benefit from helpful and comprehensive advice and guidance. Teachers tailor this to learners' aspirations at the start of, and during, their course.
- Teachers and learners have a good understanding of diversity, especially in terms of the different needs of clients from different groups.
- Learners develop a good understanding of occupational health issues.
- The organisation has a strong culture of keeping learners safe and helping them keep themselves safe. However, not all staff have received regular training to update their awareness of safeguarding.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Escala Training Academy (Escala) is owned and operated by the chief executive. The chief executive undertakes all aspects of leadership and management of the provision and, along with two teachers, also delivers training.
- Escala started in 2004 as a nail and beauty salon. In 2013, the company started providing training for apprentices in hair and beauty, as a subcontractor. In 2015, the provider gained its own contract for delivering training to adult learners. In 2017, the provider stopped delivering apprenticeships and focused on providing adult learning programmes in beauty therapy and nail services.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all staff receive regular, refresher training on safeguarding so that they are up to date with current guidelines and requirements.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - checking that learners have understood what is being taught
 - developing learners' skills in English and mathematics within the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Staff and learners share in a culture of ambition and high expectations. This helps learners achieve their qualifications and progress into employment.
- In 2016/17, achievement rates dropped significantly to about 20 percentage points below national averages. The chief executive correctly identified this was happening and the reasons for it. Prompt and effective action made sure that achievement rates for 2017/18 improved significantly.
- There is an appropriate focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Observations focus on what learners know and the progress they make in lessons. Good use is made of learners' feedback from surveys and discussions following lesson observations to monitor and improve the quality of the provision.
- Staff performance is managed well. Prompt and effective action is taken in the event of underperformance. Evidence from a range of sources, including learners' feedback, is used to monitor performance effectively. The chief executive has moved back into a teaching role to monitor teaching and learning more closely.
- Arrangements for continuing professional development for staff are good. This development focuses effectively on both professional and educational skills. Staff plan this training in advance and record it in detail. However, the provider does not routinely assess and record the impact of this training on learners.
- Self-assessment is robust. The provider follows a clear quality assurance calendar and uses information well from a wide range of sources to inform the development of the self-assessment report. The report is very clear, detailed and evaluative, and focuses well on the experience of the learners. The report is very accurate and includes the development issues inspectors identified.
- Close links with employers in the region are used to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of learners. There is routine monitoring of the courses offered and changes made in response to skills demands in the region. This ensures that learners are well prepared to meet the regional demands.
- Clear systems are in place to monitor learners' progress. The chief executive maintains a detailed knowledge of the progress being made by each learner. In addition, there are regular meetings with staff to review learners' progress in even more detail.
- Staff monitor learners' progression closely. For example, the provider keeps 'Where are they now?' records. These are detailed case studies of what happened to learners following their training. As a result, the provider has a very good knowledge of the proportion of learners finding employment soon after completing their qualification.
- Learners receive timely and appropriate careers advice and guidance, both at the start of their course and during it. Learners sometimes change their aspirations while studying, and staff respond well to this with additional guidance.
- Staff promote equality and diversity effectively. They have a clear focus on ensuring that learners develop a good understanding of fundamental British values and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism relevant to their lives.

- The provider does not focus sufficiently on developing learners' English and mathematics skills beyond the needs of their qualifications, particularly for the most able learners. The provider has started to offer functional skills qualifications.

The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements are strong and appropriate.
- Although there is no formal governing body or trustees, there is sufficient external oversight and challenge to improve the quality of provision, for example using the company accountant to provide specific financial advice. The chief executive also employs an independent, specialist consultant to carry out regular quality assurance visits. The most recent of these was in April 2018, and leaders quickly followed the improvement advice given.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The organisation has a strong culture of keeping learners safe and helping them keep themselves safe. Learners have detailed guidance about keeping themselves safe from bullying and abuse when planning to offer a mobile service in clients' homes. When providing evening classes, staff focus on additional risks to learners, such as ensuring that learners have clear arrangements for travelling home safely.
- Leaders ensure that suitably trained professionals carry out health and safety checks and risk assessments. They ensure that the risk assessments are updated regularly.
- The provider has implemented the 'Prevent' duty well.
- Staff have received a range of additional training in safeguarding. For example, one teacher has had training about female genital mutilation. However, staff do not receive sufficiently regular updating in safeguarding. In particular, the leader has not completed a training update for 18 months. Leaders are aware of this weakness.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Good teaching and a well-designed curriculum give learners a high-quality learning experience. A strong emphasis on teaching in a commercial salon helps learners develop their confidence and self-esteem. This also prepares them well for employment and their next steps. As a result, learners are making good progress towards their individual goals.
- Teachers use their considerable knowledge and skills to develop interesting lessons and promote high standards of work. They keep themselves up to date on current industry practices and use products and specialist equipment that learners will find in the workplace.
- Staff plan learning well and deliver very effective teaching. For example, teachers use creative activities that reinforce business practices, such as preparing nails and applying tips in a timed session.
- Staff develop learners' English skills to meet the needs of their qualifications. Teachers pay particularly close attention to learners who have not found these aspects easy in the past and who have lost confidence in their abilities. Teachers set work that takes account

of learners' prior achievement in these subjects. Teachers help learners to improve their writing skills by correcting errors in their spelling and grammar.

- Teachers effectively help learners develop the mathematics skills needed for their profession. They give individual support to those with very low ability and confidence. Teachers make good use of resources to help learners develop their mathematical skills, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. For example, they introduce learners to percentages and ratios by discussing mixing and coverage rates when preparing nail treatments.
- Learners' English and mathematics skills beyond the needs of their qualifications are not developed well, particularly for the most able learners.
- Teachers work well with learners to set well-focused, individual targets and objectives based on their current knowledge. Teachers and learners review these targets weekly and refine them to keep learners motivated, especially the most able, to provide help for those who may be falling behind.
- Teachers do not always check learners' understanding well enough to be able to respond to any queries or concerns and ensure that learners are secure in their learning before moving onto the next topic.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- The open culture ensures that staff promote all aspects of good behaviour and welfare. Staff are very experienced and knowledgeable role models who set clear boundaries and expectations for learners' behaviour. Learners feel safe in the calm environment provided by staff. As a result, learners become more confident and self-assured.
- Learners benefit from additional skills coaching and develop good employability skills. Teachers provide coaching for learners in specialist techniques such as 'lash lifting' and 'gel polishing'. In addition, teachers coach learners with writing their curriculum vitae and interview techniques, as well as other relevant subjects such as personal presentation.
- For those wanting to run their own business, teachers give good guidance about becoming self-employed, including topics such as raising finance.
- Learners develop good customer care skills. They understand the differing needs of clients and treat them with sensitivity, dignity and respect. In addition, learners respect customer confidentiality. They demonstrate these skills well when completing consultations prior to beauty treatments with clients.
- Teachers and learners celebrate diversity well. Learners organise themed events to promote the industry and prepare themselves for working in a multicultural society. For example, current learners are organising an Asian-themed evening with music, food and cultural dress to embrace the diversity of the local community.
- Learners demonstrate a good level of practical skills in beauty care. For example, they use microabrasion tools very effectively when preparing to exfoliate the client's skin.
- Learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and clients safe when working with hazardous products and treatments. They understand the occupational health issues associated with incorrect posture and balance, as well as with potentially harmful chemicals.

- Learners feel safe and have an appropriate understanding of radicalisation and extremism. They know who to approach should they need to report any problems or concerns.
- Teachers reinforce the importance of personal safety for learners who may become self-employed and work in a mobile situation or from home.
- Learners have only a superficial understanding of how to maintain good mental health and the help available to them if required. While this is introduced at an early stage of the course it is not as robustly reinforced with learners as physical safety, health and well-being.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Learners make good progress from their starting points, and all groups of learners make similar progress. Staff make good use of information about their prior learning to ensure that learners are on courses which challenge them to improve their skills and employability.
- Achievement rates are now high, having recovered from the dip in performance in 2016/17.
- Progression rates are high. In the last full year, 33 of the 38 learners who started the course completed their qualification and most gained employment or, in their view, moved to a better job in the industry.
- Learners develop high-quality work that meets industry standards.
- Learners develop good verbal English skills. This is particularly helpful when carrying out consultations with new clients.
- Learners make good use of the detailed feedback provided by teachers to extend their knowledge and refine their skills. Learners whose work does not initially meet industry standards rework their assignments or practise their practical skill further before resubmitting their work. As a result, they rise to the challenge to meet their full potential.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1237116
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	38
Principal/CEO	Samantha Warren
Telephone number	01702 555566
Website	www.nailandbeautytrainingacademy.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	–	–	–	–	–	13	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
		–		–		–		–
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	–							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. Inspectors observed learning, and scrutinised assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision.

Inspection team

Derrick Baughan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector
Jonny Wright	Ofsted Inspector

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