

# Skills Edge Training Ltd

Independent Learning Provider

## Inspection dates

4–7 June 2019

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Leaders have taken swift and effective action to improve the provision since the monitoring visit in 2018.
- Leaders and managers work well with partners to ensure that the provision meets local and regional skills priorities.
- Leaders use data very effectively to monitor the quality of provision and apprentices' progress.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of safeguarding and the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Apprentices develop substantial new skills, behaviours and attitudes. Many apprentices develop skills beyond the requirements of their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices' work is of a good standard and benefits their employers.
- Most apprentices make good progress, with over a third making very good progress, from their starting points.
- Apprentices stay in employment or move on to higher-level programmes after completing their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices develop a very good understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Trainers use their extensive industrial knowledge and experience effectively to provide learning that gives apprentices tasks that motivate them and develops their skills.
- Apprentices benefit from high-quality individual coaching that gives them confidence and further develops their skills.
- Hairdressing apprentices benefit from a range of additional qualifications and activities that help them gain a good understanding of the industry.
- Hairdressing apprentices do not develop their written English skills to a high standard.
- Written feedback to hairdressing apprentices is merely motivational and of limited value as an aid to learning.
- Apprentices are proud of their work, enjoy their learning and attend well.

## **Full report**

### **Information about the provider**

- Skills Edge Training Limited (Skills Edge) is based in Norwich. Apprentices are located across the country and taught in five training centres around England. Four of these centres are operated by subcontractors. Since the previous inspection, leaders have restructured the organisation and reduced significantly the number of subcontractors with whom they work, and the number of apprentices on programme.
- At the time of inspection, about 160 apprentices are on programmes studying hairdressing, financial services, customer services, business administration and hospitality. Of these, about 85% are on standards-based apprenticeships with the remainder on framework apprenticeships.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve further?**

- Leaders and managers need to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of hairdressing apprentices further by:
  - ensuring that trainers' written feedback is developmental and helps apprentices understand how to improve
  - ensuring that apprentices develop English skills of a high standard.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders have taken rapid action to improve the quality of the provision since the monitoring visit in August 2018. At this visit, inspectors judged that the provider was making insufficient progress in many aspects. Since then, leaders have appointed new staff with significant experience of apprenticeship provision. This work has had a demonstrable impact on apprentices' outcomes and reversed the downward trend in achievement rates.
- Staff at all levels work effectively with partners to ensure that the provision meets local and national skills needs. As a result, apprentices are studying relevant qualifications that make them employable and help them improve their future career prospects.
- Leaders make excellent use of management information to monitor the quality of the provision and the progress that apprentices make. Leaders have developed bespoke systems that are very informative. As a result, they have a detailed knowledge of apprentices' progress and use this knowledge usefully to help apprentices get back on schedule if they fall behind.
- The self-assessment process is effective. Managers make good use of feedback from staff, apprentices and employers. The self-assessment report focuses appropriately on the quality of the provision, is judgemental and is accurate.
- Leaders have introduced a good strategy for developing apprentices' English and mathematics skills. This includes the recent appointment of a specialist to provide in-depth support for apprentices. This strategy has had a positive impact on functional skills achievement rates. However, it has not yet had an impact on helping hairdressing apprentices develop their written English skills to a high standard.
- Leaders have improved the rigour with which they monitor the quality of subcontracted provision. Staff carry out frequent visits to subcontractors to provide support and improve quality. Subcontractors are fully involved in self-assessment and have good communication links with Skills Edge. As a result, the quality of subcontracted provision has improved.
- Managers' observations of learning do not focus closely enough on identifying and improving the teaching skills of trainers. As a result, training plans for staff do not focus enough on the craft of teaching to enable them to become more skilful trainers.

### The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements provide suitable challenge to, and oversight of, the provision. Skills Edge has a separate board, which receives detailed monthly performance reports. Board members have a good understanding of the quality of the provision and the progress apprentices make.

### Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Apprentices feel safe and demonstrate safe working practices. They have a good understanding of how to report concerns. Leaders ensure that staff undertake Disclosure and Barring Service checks. Managers record the results of these in detail. While there have been no recent incidents, leaders have created clear procedures for staff to follow in the event of an incident occurring. The designated safeguarding officer is suitably qualified.
- Leaders ensure that all staff receive detailed training, which is updated frequently. Leaders have also introduced a range of teaching materials and activities to help apprentices develop their understanding of safeguarding and related subjects. As a result, apprentices have a good awareness of safeguarding, including when working online, and how to protect themselves from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Apprentices develop good skills, knowledge and behaviours because of good-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Staff use their extensive qualifications and experience to give apprentices learning tasks that motivate them and help them develop good practical skills. Trainers plan learning very effectively and give apprentices good verbal feedback to help them make good progress.
- Trainers use questions successfully to check and extend apprentices' in-depth understanding. As a result, apprentices develop a detailed theoretical knowledge of their subject, and a good technical and professional vocabulary.
- Apprentices benefit from high-quality individual coaching. This helps them develop their job-specific skills and confidence. As a result, they feel competent to take on challenging work. For example, a hairdressing apprentice rectified a poor-quality haircut from a different salon.
- Apprentices benefit from good support from trainers. They make frequent visits to apprentices' workplaces and closely monitor their progress. Communication between trainers and employers is good. As a result, employers are fully involved in helping apprentices make good progress.
- Trainers are good at identifying apprentices with additional needs and provide effective support for them. As a result, these apprentices make good progress and achieve at the same rate as their peers. Trainers give dedicated support to apprentices with challenging medical conditions, ensuring that they remain on their programmes and make progress.
- Written feedback to apprentices is mostly developmental and enables apprentices to understand how to improve. However, too often written feedback to hairdressing apprentices is merely motivational.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

- Apprentices enjoy their learning and attend well. Overall attendance is consistently high. Apprentices take great pride in their work and speak highly of the value of their apprenticeships.
- Apprentices' work is of a good standard, which benefits them in their workplaces.

Apprentices develop additional skills beyond the requirements of their programme and gain additional responsibilities at work. For example, a financial apprentice routinely handles initial calls from prospective clients. In hairdressing, several apprentices deliver training on techniques they have learned on their programmes, to other staff in the salon.

- Hairdressing apprentices benefit from a range of planned activities to develop their understanding of employability issues and their chosen career. These activities include photo shoots and fashion shows. For example, all apprentices at one centre had the opportunity to go to a fashion show in Milan. Those that chose to go gave a detailed presentation about the trip and what they had learned, to their peers.
- Apprentices develop a good understanding of modern Britain and their role in it. Managers have developed a very good teaching resource, 'my world matters'. Apprentices use this throughout their apprenticeship and learn about a wide range of personal, social and ethical issues. As a result, apprentices have a good understanding of issues about society, equality and diversity, such as female genital mutilation.
- Apprentices have an appropriate understanding of their career opportunities. Staff provide detailed information, advice and guidance at the start of the programme. Trainers provide effective guidance throughout apprentices' programmes.
- In too many cases, apprentices in hairdressing do not develop good written English skills. Trainers do not routinely give feedback on apprentices' errors in English. Leaders have established a good strategy to deal with this, including recruiting an experienced specialist. However, it is too recent to have had an impact.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- The proportion of apprentices who complete their qualification within the time planned is high. Most current apprentices are making good progress, with over a third making very good progress, from their starting points.
- Apprentices develop good skills, knowledge and behaviours. They articulate these clearly. For example, a group of apprentices gave a detailed explanation of 'balayage', a technique of free-hand painting of highlights onto the hair, creating a soft and gradual lightness towards the end of the hair.
- Hairdressing apprentices benefit from gaining additional qualifications that are not part of their programme. For example, they gain qualifications in barbering and hair tinting, which makes them more employable.
- The proportion of apprentices who move to positive destinations following completion of their apprenticeship is extremely high. In the previous two years, almost all apprentices either stayed in employment, progressed to a higher-level apprenticeship or moved into further education.
- Because of the better focus on English and mathematics, leaders have increased the proportion of apprentices who achieve their functional skills qualifications. In addition, leaders have increased the proportion of apprentices who pass these examinations first time.
- Leaders have dealt effectively with gaps in achievement between different groups. In 2017/18, the most noticeable gap was that 16- to 18-year-old apprentices achieved

significantly less well than those 19 years or older. Leaders' actions have resulted in this gap, and others, closing swiftly.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	59147
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	300
Principal/CEO	James Miller
Telephone number	03333 583 559
Website	<a href="http://www.skillsedge.co.uk">www.skillsedge.co.uk</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level  Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	62	11	32	31	1	23		
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:	Bespoke Hairdressing Training Academy Fusion Hair Consultants James Core Limited Lincoln Hairdressing Academy							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, 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. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Derrick Baughan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Hamp	Her Majesty's Inspector
Saskia Niderost	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Marks	Ofsted Inspector



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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