

# Hair Academy South West Limited

Interim visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 52095

**Name of lead inspector:** Steven Tucker, HMI

**Visit dates:** 1–2 October 2020

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** 120 East Reach  
Taunton  
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## **Interim visit**

### **Context and focus of visit**

On 17 March 2020, all routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out 'interim visits' to further education and skills providers. Interim visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners and apprentices in this period, including learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. We intend to return to routine inspection in January 2021 but will keep the exact timing under review.

The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below and the findings are based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and learners.

### **Information about the provider**

Hair Academy South West Limited (HASW) provides training for apprentices in salons across the south of England. Around 240 apprentices are enrolled on level 2 and level 3 apprenticeships. Just under half of these are trained by HASW staff. These apprentices are trained in the company's training centre in Taunton and in their salons. A third of apprentices are trained by a subcontractor in Kent in their training centre or in their workplaces. The remaining apprentices are trained by four other subcontractors. A very high proportion of apprentices are on apprenticeships in hairdressing, with a few on apprenticeships in barbering or beauty therapy.

### **What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of learners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?**

Employers believe that HASW leaders understand the safety and economic pressures salons are experiencing. They are confident that leaders have taken these into account in the arrangements for training and supporting their apprentices. HASW leaders have involved them in decisions about their apprentices' training. They recognise that staff at HASW have had increased communications with them since March 2020 and feel that their apprentices are in safe hands.

Leaders' greatest concern has been for apprentices who have had difficulty completing their apprenticeship. This happened largely because staff could not assess apprentices' practical hairdressing skills and awarding bodies stopped carrying out final assessments. This slowed apprentices' progress, and some have not been able to progress to the next level. Leaders are taking the necessary steps to complete assessments for these apprentices and reducing the assessment backlog.

Leaders and subcontractors agree that they have worked closely to adapt and amend subcontractors' curriculums so that apprentices can continue to make progress. For example, subcontractors have prioritised opportunities for apprentices to practise

their skills and to complete assessments. Leaders have provided curriculum materials to subcontractors and shared ideas for keeping apprentices engaged with their training.

During the period when providers were only open to some learners due to COVID-19 restrictions, leaders recognised the need to increase the amount of online teaching. They have increased the range of resources apprentices can access at work or at home and expect them to submit their work online. They are also making better use of technology to monitor the quality of subcontractors' work remotely and to communicate with employers.

Leaders feel that they have learned a lot about different ways of implementing the curriculum. They believe that they will need to reflect on how their experiences will shape the curriculum in future and how to ensure their apprenticeships are of the highest standard. Leaders are considering introducing some form of governance to help them with this.

**What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of learners?**

Staff have adjusted the curriculum, having recognised how apprentices' fluency and mastery of skills were negatively affected by COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders report that some learners became 'rusty', while others lacked opportunities to practise their skills. Some had family on whom they could practise their styling techniques during COVID-19 restrictions. Others had no one. When salons re-opened in July, they reduced the number of clients. This further reduced opportunities for apprentices to practise a range of techniques.

Staff have worked closely with employers to help apprentices catch up. Some salons have found extra clients on whom apprentices can practise or carry out assessments. HASW leaders opened their training centre in Taunton as soon as they considered it safe to do so.

Apprentices feel that staff have given them the reassurance and support they need to return safely to the training centre. Staff have extended the training day by adding a 'tutor hour' and an 'after-academy hour'. Trainers use these sessions to provide extra training for apprentices who have fallen behind and to give welfare support and guidance. They offer activities that some apprentices cannot carry out in their workplaces, for example in certain styling techniques and photography. Employers and apprentices feel that HASW staff have been careful to take each apprentice's circumstances into account when making decisions about the curriculum.

Staff have made particular efforts to support apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This support has taken place during the extra teaching hours, as well as online.

## **How are leaders ensuring that learners are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?**

Staff have increased the support they provide to apprentices since COVID-19 restrictions were introduced. They contact apprentices weekly to discuss their welfare and well-being and offer practical and emotional support. Apprentices felt reassured about going back to work, having had the opportunity to discuss the arrangements their employers had put in place.

Leaders have reviewed and increased the guidance they give to new apprentices during their induction about how to be safe online. Leaders are planning to provide similar information to apprentices who had their inductions before the pandemic started.

Leaders have been supporting staff and subcontractors to improve their knowledge of online safety. A subcontractor was grateful for the resources leaders gave them on awareness of online safety and the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

Leaders have kept abreast of rapidly changing safety guidance for the hairdressing and beauty therapy sector and are training apprentices in the safe working practices that employers now require.

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