

# Inspection of SAKS (Education) Limited

Inspection dates:

26–29 October 2021

## Overall effectiveness

**Outstanding**

The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Apprenticeships

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

## Information about this provider

SAKS (Education) Limited began providing apprenticeships in 1999. At the time of the inspection, 434 apprentices were enrolled, of whom 424 were on standards-based programmes and 10 were on frameworks. Of the apprentices on standards-based programmes, 312 were on level 2 hair professional, 33 were on level 2 beauty professional, 14 were on level 2 barbering professional, 57 were on level 3 advanced and creative hair professional and eight were on level 3 well-being and holistic therapist. All the apprentices on frameworks were on level 3 hairdressing. SAKS (Education) Limited provides apprenticeships across England for employers in the hairdressing and beauty therapy sectors and delivers training for apprentices in the workplace and in academies based in Darlington and Maidstone.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Apprentices demonstrate highly professional behaviours and attitudes to their work. The strong focus on professional behaviours embedded in the curriculum sets a clear standard for apprentices to follow. Apprentices are punctual and organised, and they prepare well for working with clients. They develop a passion for hairdressing and beauty therapy through their work in prestigious salons. They enjoy their training, become highly valued employees and make very good progress in developing their knowledge and skills.

Apprentices benefit from a range of professional training that is additional to their main programme. This includes training in advanced cutting techniques, eyelash extensions, spray tanning and gel nails. This training helps apprentices to enhance further their hairdressing and beauty therapy skills.

Through a well-crafted induction and frequent learning activities, apprentices gain a good understanding of a wide range of topical and current issues. This enables them to engage confidently in conversations with clients and colleagues about current affairs and issues that affect them at work and at home. For example, they discuss the impact of the recent fuel crisis with clients.

Educators are open, friendly and welcoming. They celebrate apprentices' strengths and support apprentices to be resilient in the face of the challenges that they face, such as the impact of the pandemic. Educators very successfully motivate apprentices to consider how they can meet the needs of clients from a wide range of different backgrounds. Apprentices clearly demonstrate mutual respect for others in their workplace.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to recognise risks and to report any concerns that they have. The weekly 'hot topics' that apprentices discuss in social media groups carefully focus on issues that affect them in their everyday lives, including recent drink-spiking incidents. Apprentices feel confident that they have support if they need it and know who they can contact if they have any concerns.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and educators work very effectively and closely with employers to plan the curriculum for hairdressing and beauty therapy apprenticeships. This ensures that apprentices develop the skills that they need and that they acquire these skills in the right order to be successful on their apprenticeship. For example, level 2 hair professional apprentices study colouring and cutting techniques first as these techniques require the greatest length of time to gain proficiency. They then progress to learning more complex techniques.

Leaders and managers respond well to the specific requirements and needs of employers. For example, they provide apprentices on the level 3 well-being and

holistic therapist programme with extra training on using electrical facial techniques in response to employers' business needs.

Educators are highly experienced in their vocational areas and have relevant teaching qualifications. They have many years of experience, and they keep up to date through frequent training provided by leaders, by gaining vendor qualifications and by updating their knowledge about products. Educators use their knowledge and experience well in one-to-one training with apprentices. They demonstrate techniques accurately and carefully, which enables apprentices to develop quickly their understanding of how to use these techniques. They also use innovative resources such as quick response (QR) codes that enable apprentices to access images of contra-indications.

Apprentices receive very useful careers advice and guidance at the start of their programme using an online module that helps to prepare them for their apprenticeship. Educators discuss with apprentices their next steps and progression routes frequently throughout the apprenticeship, including how to progress onto level 3 programmes. Apprentices have a good understanding of the opportunities available within the hairdressing and beauty therapy industry.

Apprentices benefit from well-planned and high-quality on- and off-the-job training. Educators work closely with employers to ensure that apprentices can practise and develop their skills further when working with clients. For example, level 2 hair professional apprentices learn hair-colouring techniques and then practise their skills when working alongside experienced hair professionals and on their own clients.

Educators ensure that teaching focuses very effectively on the technical knowledge that apprentices need to have and apply at work. For example, apprentices learn how to give style maintenance advice to clients based on what they have learned about the hydroscopic nature of hair. When apprentices do not develop rapidly enough the skills that they need, educators adjust teaching plans with employers appropriately to help apprentices to catch up.

Educators assess apprentices' knowledge and skills very accurately. They observe and evaluate apprentices when demonstrating skills such as hair-colouring, cutting and styling. They question apprentices very effectively, including probing to check apprentices' deeper understanding of professional techniques. Educators provide apprentices with extremely helpful feedback that helps them to improve their knowledge and skills. Apprentices receive clear targets that indicate what they need to improve and what actions to take.

Apprentices quickly develop high-level practical skills that they apply with confidence at work. Level 3 creative hair professional apprentices confidently carry out complex colour services. They complete colour correction alongside technically challenging remedial colour services. Level 2 hair professional apprentices can accurately explain the physical effects of blow drying and heated styling on the hair structure using various examples. They can also explain the effects of humidity on the hair using appropriate technical language.

Educators ensure that the curriculum develops and improves apprentices' English and mathematical skills successfully. They provide teaching activities that build well on apprentices' existing skills and prior learning. Apprentices use helpful resources, including online videos, to develop their English and mathematical skills. They develop a good understanding of terminology that is used in the hairdressing and beauty therapy industry. They communicate very well with clients and colleagues in the salons where they work.

Leaders support their workforce exceptionally well. They manage staff with compassion and ensure that staff are not overloaded with work or have unmanageable caseloads. Leaders support and guide new members of staff effectively to ensure that they are suitable for the job role and share the same ambitions as the rest of the team. Staff speak very highly of the support and guidance that they receive from their managers.

Governance is highly effective. Board members share the ambition and vision of leaders to provide high-quality apprenticeships. Specialist governors have been appointed to ensure that the quality of education, the financial aspects of the organisation and safeguarding are always prioritised. Governors regularly provide relevant challenge and support to leaders to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the quality of the apprenticeship programme.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have implemented effective safeguarding policies and procedures to keep apprentices safe. They have excellent relationships with the local safeguarding partnership that enable them to have in place appropriate procedures and to be kept up to date with emerging risks across the country.

Experienced and appropriately trained designated safeguarding leads are highly visible to apprentices at the provider's main centres. They ensure that all staff, apprentices and employers are briefed regularly on emerging risks and how to protect apprentices from harm. For example, leaders and managers have responded to the recently published new guidance on the risks of sexual harassment and abuse by identifying quickly actions that they need to take with their staff, employers and apprentices.

## **Provider details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	54248
<b>Address</b>	66 Duke Street Darlington DL3 7AN
<b>Contact number</b>	07968 869213
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.saksapprenticeships.co.uk">www.saksapprenticeships.co.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Tina Ockerby
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	May 2006
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Not applicable

## 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. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

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