

Inspection of Easi Hairdressing Academy Limited

Inspection dates:

24 to 26 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires Improvement

The quality of education

Requires Improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires Improvement

Leadership and management

Requires Improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires Improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Information about this provider

Easi Hairdressing Academy Ltd (the academy) gained a direct contract to provide apprenticeships in January 2017. It operates from one location in Colchester. All 82 of the academy's apprentices are studying hairdressing. There are 71 apprentices on level 2 hair professional standards, with the remainder on level 3 hair professional standards. Around a quarter of all apprentices are also studying English and mathematics functional skills. Apprentices are mostly based in north Essex, with a very small proportion in London. The academy does not have any high needs funded apprentices. The academy does not use subcontractors.

Apprentices work in good-quality salons. They carry out a variety of hairdressing services, such as cutting, blow-drying and tinting. They also provide support for salon staff by shampooing, making appointments and selling retail products.

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

Apprentices enjoy their studies. They speak positively about the high levels of support from academy staff that enable them to gain confidence, stay in learning and achieve.

Apprentices develop good professional behaviours during their training programme. They communicate well with academy staff, colleagues at work and clients. They develop effective customer care skills.

Apprentices value the caring and supportive environment that staff promote at the academy. This enables them to develop an inclusive approach to their relationships with staff, their peers and clients. They understand that people are individuals and should be treated as such.

Apprentices understand their roles at work and how they contribute to the business. Level 2 apprentices support stylists and managers with client consultation, shampooing and dealing with new and existing customer queries. Consequently, employers value their apprentices, considering them integral to the smooth running of the salon.

Apprentices feel safe at work and at the academy. This is because salon employers and academy staff frequently discuss their apprentices' training and needs. Salon and academy managers have established a culture of safeguarding.

Apprentices on level 3 hair professional standards are not always clear about what they need to do to achieve their programme. They make slow progress and are not ready for their final assessments.

Apprentices do not always know precisely how to improve their work. Apprentices cannot compare their current hairdressing skills with those required of them to achieve high grades.

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

Leaders and managers do not provide an appropriate programme for level 3 apprentices. Apprentices are not always able to describe what they have learned. They do not make sufficient progress and are unprepared for their final assessments. Leaders have identified this as an area for improvement, but actions taken to date have had insufficient time to achieve full impact.

Leaders and staff do not always use apprentices' initial assessment information to tailor training to suit their prior experience and attainment. Apprentices self-assess their skills and knowledge levels when they start their programme, but the accuracy of this assessment is not checked by academy staff. A few apprentices assess themselves incorrectly and as a result, they make slow progress.

Leaders and managers have not yet developed an effective strategy for the continuous improvement of apprentices' English and mathematics skills. Apprentices studying towards examinations in English and mathematics work on these skills during hairdressing training times. This means they lose valuable hairdressing skills practice. Trainers do not enable apprentices who have achieved the required qualifications in English and mathematics to continue to improve these skills. As a result, apprentices often do not see the importance of these subjects and their written work does not improve over time.

Trainers do not provide the consistently clear and detailed feedback that apprentices need to improve their work to high standards. Apprentices' programmes have graded final assessments, but most apprentices do not aim for a specific grade. As a result, apprentices do not know how to improve their work to levels that compare with an aspirational target grade.

Trainers use good-quality demonstrations and insightful discussions to develop apprentices' skills and knowledge. Trainers encourage apprentices to share experiences from their workplaces, such as when they resolved clients' concerns. As a result of these reflections, apprentices learn from each other and improve their practice.

Apprentices develop their understanding well and consider theoretical aspects of hairdressing when they are using practical skills. Trainers skilfully enable apprentices to embed key concepts into their long-term memory by connecting hairdressing theory and practice effectively. Apprentices describe the influence that hair growth patterns such as a double crown have when tension is used during a haircut.

Most apprentices on level 2 standards develop good knowledge, skills and positive behaviours for work. A few apprentices furloughed during the COVID-19 pandemic found alternative employment and did not return to the hairdressing industry. Apprentices who returned to their salons, including those with additional learning needs, successfully achieve. However, leaders have not ensured that level 3 apprentices and a few level 2 apprentices who have passed their planned end dates make good progress.

Academy leaders and salon managers promote positive learning environments. They are calm, orderly and conducive to learning. Apprentices contribute to these environments by being friendly and responding positively to work requests. They enjoy working and learning in salons that support their development.

Salon managers and staff set clear expectations of apprentices' conduct in the workplace. Apprentices understand the reasons for these expected behaviours and uphold high standards when at work. Apprentices interact with clients in a proactive, friendly and polite manner. However, training staff at the academy do not always promote the same high levels of professional behaviours. A few apprentices use their phones during lessons or do not maintain a tidy working environment in the academy salon.

Apprentices' attendance and punctuality are good. Leaders and staff reinforce the importance of these behaviours and as a result apprentices have consistently high levels of attendance and punctuality.

Apprentices do not have a good understanding of many aspects of life in modern Britain. Apprentices often do not understand how British values, and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism, apply to their personal and professional lives. Information on these essential themes is provided when apprentices start their programme but is not routinely revisited on programme.

Apprentices benefit from the comprehensive pastoral and academic support provided by their salons and the academy. Apprentices acknowledge and value the high levels of support they receive for well-being and mental health issues. This enables most to continue with their training and complete on time. Apprentices with identified support needs receive tailored support that keeps them motivated to learn. However, apprentices do not develop a good awareness of how to keep physically healthy and maintain an active lifestyle.

Apprentices develop the positive qualities, such as adapting to change and developing effective working relationships, that are essential to building a career as a successful hairdresser. Apprentices are confident when questioning clients to establish their needs and requirements for hairdressing services. Apprentices develop their ability to handle client complaints or difficult customers while maintaining a pleasant and helpful attitude.

Staff ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of their career options. Academy staff draw on their extensive hairdressing experience and strong industry connections to enable apprentices to identify future goals, keeping them motivated. A careers display at the academy shows apprentices the different directions they can take. Further opportunities are explored through open days and careers events. As a result, apprentices are enthusiastic about their future careers in the hairdressing industry.

Leaders' use of quality assurance strategies is not yet fully effective. Leaders use quality processes to complete annual self-assessment and develop action plans that provide a skeleton framework for improvement. However, although leaders have identified strategies to remedy areas that require improvement, such as English and mathematics, aspects of personal development and level 3 hairdressing, their actions have yet to achieve sufficient impact.

Governance arrangements are insufficient. Governors do not use an effective range of information to drive continuous improvement. They have not yet developed a set of performance indicators by which to measure progress, evaluate effectiveness or set challenging targets. Governors recognise that this is an area for development and have plans to action this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding is of central importance at the provider. Designated safeguarding leaders ensure that all staff have enhanced checks and are regularly updated in essential aspects of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that staff are frequently updated and trained on current topics of concern, such as spiking and gaslighting.

The designated safeguarding lead monitors apprentices effectively and refers any concerns. Safeguarding leaders keep and monitor detailed records that track all interactions, actions or referrals relating to the safeguarding of apprentices. Apprentices on this system have either completed their training or are still in learning.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must ensure that the programme for level 3 hair professional apprentices enables them to quickly develop advanced skills and knowledge and prepare effectively for final assessments.
- Leaders must ensure that the assessment of apprentices' starting points is accurate. Staff must use this information to provide aspirational, high-quality training.
- Leaders must develop a strategy for English and mathematics to ensure that apprentices continue to improve these skills and see their relevance to their work and everyday lives.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices develop a sound understanding of British values and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Leaders must also ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of themes relevant to their ages and contexts, such as sexual harassment and healthy relationships.
- Governors must ensure that they have a good oversight of the education and training apprentices receive. This will enable them to set challenging targets for improvement and hold leaders to account for their achievement.

Provider details

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Website	www.easihair.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Gemma Hall
Provider type	Independent Learning Provider
Date of previous inspection	July 2004

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations director as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. 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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