

Easi Hairdressing Academy Limited

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Easi Hairdressing Academy Limited (Easi) was inspected in May 2022. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in actioning the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Easi is based in Colchester, Essex. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 86 apprentices, of whom 17 were on the level 3 hair professional standard, and the remainder were on the level 2 hair professional standard. There were 22 apprentices in receipt of additional learning support. The provider does not work with any subcontractors.

Apprentices work in a variety of salons in Essex and the east of England. Apprentices carry out a range of services, such as cutting, blow-drying, styling and colouring, and more advanced services, including colour correction and restyles.

Themes

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that level 3 hair professional apprentices develop significant hairdressing skills and knowledge and are prepared effectively for their final assessments?

Reasonable progress

Apprentices develop new skills and knowledge, building on their level 2 skills appropriately. Apprentices learn razor cutting skills and understand the different effects created by clippers rather than scissors. Apprentices apply varied foil patterns effectively, such as herringbone, to achieve advanced hair colouring effects.

Apprentices become more confident in their roles as salon stylists. They can cut and colour hair independently. Apprentices understand the importance of client consultations and carry them out with expertise.

Leaders have improved their focus on preparing apprentices appropriately for end-point assessments. A small proportion of apprentices who are close to their final assessments are preparing well for their precision cut and colour conversion. They have selected their models and are planning for their professional discussion. Apprentices who are not yet ready for these assessments now consider them earlier and start their preparations in good time. Although the proportion of apprentices

past their planned end dates is still too high, most are now making steady progress towards their final assessments.

Tutors do not ensure that apprentices have sufficient opportunities to practise their skills in the workplace. In some cases, salons where apprentices train do not provide clients on whom apprentices can practise their skills, such as balayage or ombre. Apprentices are encouraged to find models who desire these specific styles, but this is too often dependant on the apprentice or the employer. As a result, apprentices do not always quickly secure their learning by continuous practise.

Staff and apprentices agree ambitious target grades for apprentices' final assessments, and progress is monitored carefully. Apprentices complete regular self-assessment, enabling them to evaluate their progress in the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours and to identify any gaps in their learning. This motivates apprentices by showing them how much their skills and knowledge have developed. However, the targets set by their tutors do not follow up apprentices' self-evaluations and often relate to general skills development. As a result, apprentices often do not know the precise skills and knowledge aspects that they need to develop to achieve high grades.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that apprentices develop their English and mathematics employability skills?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have developed a robust action plan to improve apprentices' English and mathematics skills and knowledge. Leaders have recruited specialist tutors to teach apprentices and to mark their work. These tutors now consistently identify apprentices' spelling and punctuation errors. However, salon trainers do not always routinely check apprentices' written work to reinforce this rigorous approach. As a result, a few apprentices continue to make errors in spelling.

English and mathematics tutors are alert to employer concerns. They respond positively to feedback from employers about apprentices' timekeeping by designing and teaching sessions on telling the time using analogue devices. Consequently, apprentices improve their ability to allocate accurate timings to their services at work.

Apprentices have an effective awareness of the importance of English and mathematics in their lives and careers. Apprentices use these skills with confidence at work by recording the details of clients' technical hair treatments or using ratios to mix hair products and addition to calculate clients' bills.

Leaders' strategy for the continuous development of English and mathematics is not yet fully developed or effective. For example, apprentices' reviews do not evaluate their progress in English and mathematics or set targets for their improvement. As a result, planned actions to improve apprentices' English and mathematics skills have yet to achieve full impact. Leaders' new timetabling arrangements give great

importance to English and mathematics. Apprentices now have dedicated time for English and mathematics lessons with designated tutors. Apprentices value these new arrangements

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that they are sufficiently challenged by governors to improve the quality of education and training?

Reasonable progress

Governors have improved their oversight of the provision. They now meet frequently, and they are actively involved in quality assurance arrangements. For example, governors carry out quality visits to Easi, where they conduct lesson visits and evaluate apprentices' feedback. Governors now use a good range of information to evaluate the progress of apprentices. They receive quarterly reports that indicate the progress apprentices make by use of amber, red or green ratings.

Governors meet frequently with senior leaders. They have recently agreed a robust set of performance indicators with senior leaders and use a detailed quality improvement plan to monitor progress towards them.

However, this level of scrutiny by governors has only recently been fully established. Although improvements are starting to be seen, they have yet to fully impact on apprentices' progress. Consequently, governance arrangements do not yet provide the sustained challenge needed to ensure that apprentices make good progress and achieve within planned timescales.

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