

Inspection of Oracle Training Consultants Limited

Inspection dates: 8 to 11 August 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Oracle Training Consultants Limited is an independent learning provider based in South Yorkshire. It provides specialist training for adult learners and apprentices in the hair and beauty sector. Teaching and training take place at the provider's Doncaster and Rotherham centres, both of which also operate as commercial salons. At the time of this inspection, there were 61 adult learners enrolled on level 3 courses, with most studying hairdressing. A few adult learners were enrolled on level 4 teaching and assessor qualifications. There were 49 apprentices enrolled on a range of level 2 and level 3 hair and beauty standards. Three quarters of apprentices were aged 16 to 18.

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

Learners and apprentices work in calm and professional salon environments. Tutors provide them with a safe and welcoming space to learn. They encourage learners and apprentices to seek clarification when they are not sure about the correct beauty or hairdressing techniques to use and help them to make the correct selection.

Tutors set high expectations for professional behaviour that are aligned closely to the standard expected in salons. Learners and apprentices appreciate how staff act as role models, demonstrating commercial standards. Learners particularly benefit from a 'buddy' scheme through which new learners are supported by their more experienced peers. They value the camaraderie of their peer group and adhere well to professional salon expectations.

Learners and apprentices attend off-the-job training sessions well. They inform tutors if they are unable to attend so that alternative arrangements can be made for them to catch up on the content that they have missed. Staff are very approachable and provide guidance when learners need additional support, both during and outside of formal sessions. For example, when apprentices are in salons and practising new or difficult techniques, such as shaving and male hair colouring, they contact their tutors, who provide them with helpful guidance on the techniques that they should use.

Learners and apprentices have positive attitudes and enjoy their learning. Apprentices are enthused by listening to guest speakers, including employers and beauty suppliers. They learn highly valued employability skills from their tutors, who use their own experiences well to illustrate topics in the curriculum. For example, learners studying to become nail technicians are taught commercial practices in handling hazardous chemical products early in their training by current beauty practitioners from local salons.

Learners and apprentices feel safe at the provider. They receive useful advice about staying safe when travelling to and from the centre, such as by walking together on dark nights. Learners value the 'safe spot' scheme and know which local businesses they can go to, should they feel unsafe in the local city and town centres. Tutors provide learners and apprentices with information about local risks, such as drink spiking in local bars, and about how, as groups of females, they may be the target of unwanted attention. However, a few learners and apprentices in Rotherham are less aware of the potential local dangers, such as sexual exploitation and gang-related crimes.

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

Leaders have a clear curriculum intent as a specialist provider of hairdressing and beauty therapy across South Yorkshire. They provide education, training and apprenticeship opportunities in and around Doncaster and Rotherham. Staff work

closely with employers in the region to ensure that employers clearly understand the commitment that they are making when recruiting apprentices and that the training meets employers' specific requirements.

Leaders employ staff who are well qualified as hairdressers, nail technicians, beauty therapists and barbers. All delivery staff are current practitioners who work in, or own, hair and beauty salons. They only teach their subject specialism. In addition, staff are expected to hold relevant teaching qualifications. If staff do not hold these qualifications when they join the provider, they are supported well to achieve them quickly.

Tutors plan and sequence the curriculum well. They build on what learners and apprentices already know before they move on to more technical tasks. For example, on level 2 hairdressing standards, apprentices begin with basic block-colouring practices before carrying out challenging and creative colouring techniques. As a result, learners and apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to be successful in the hair and beauty sector.

Leaders conduct useful observations of training that provide them with a clear overview of the quality of teaching. The findings from these observations are used well to plan staff training and development. After each observation, staff are set an individual development plan that is reviewed frequently. If members of staff fall below leaders' expectations of teaching, they receive frequent support from the training manager to help them improve.

Tutors plan and use helpful formative and summative assessments to enable them to monitor the progress that learners and apprentices are making towards achieving their goals. They meet frequently with learners and apprentices to review progress and identify future targets. However, during apprentices' progress reviews, too often employers are not present or do not contribute to the setting of new workplace targets. Tutors do not consistently use the outcomes of the short-term targets well enough when they monitor the progress that apprentices make. Consequently, a few apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Tutors use questioning skilfully to assess whether learners and apprentices have secure subject knowledge and understanding. For example, they fully check whether learners on hairdressing courses understand the potential chemical and dermatological risks to clients who seek beauty treatments. Learners and apprentices understand how to mitigate these risks, such as by conducting skin patch tests on their clients prior to treatments and by wearing gloves or barrier creams during them.

Tutors make use of relevant vocational topics to develop learners' English and mathematics skills. For example, during hairdressing and barbering sessions, they support learners to write client consultations using professional subject terminology. Learners are taught how to mix hair colours accurately and the importance of exact timings at the various stages of perming. All learners complete an initial assessment in English and mathematics at the start of their course. However, tutors do not use

the results of these assessments to improve learners' knowledge and skills further. Consequently, learners often continue to make spelling and grammatical mistakes in their written assignments.

Tutors support and prepare learners well to enable them to complete their apprenticeship successfully. Most learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications. They take pride in their work, which is of the expected standard required for the qualifications or higher and is presented neatly in well-organised portfolios. However, only a few apprentices attain a distinction grade, and most are not clear about what they need to know to attain high grades in their final examinations.

Tutors support learners well to maintain their physical well-being. They ensure that learners are aware, for example, of good posture during practical activities to protect their spine. Leaders also provide free healthy breakfasts, including fruit, for all learners and apprentices so that they are well hydrated, fit and ready to learn when they are in the centre. A high proportion of learners and apprentices access these breakfasts.

Tutors provide learners and apprentices with information about local career, training and employment opportunities in South Yorkshire. When learners ask their tutors for more information about such opportunities, staff explain fully what they are. For example, learners and apprentices know that learning barbering skills will enhance their employment opportunities as a multi-skilled stylist, as many salons offer services for both men and women. However, learners are not provided with enough guidance about wider opportunities, such as how to secure work in prestigious national salon chains.

Leaders and managers have implemented a range of annual events that include guest speakers and masterclasses in hairdressing and beauty therapy. For example, an internationally renowned barber visits the training centre to talk to learners, market leaders in hair supplies talk to groups about current trends in the sector and colouring experts come to demonstrate new techniques. These events help learners and apprentices develop a deeper appreciation of the sector.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and deal swiftly when safeguarding concerns are raised. They accurately record, report and escalate concerns to the appropriate staff in the organisation. Those responsible for safeguarding ensure that appropriate actions are taken.

Leaders have a risk register to record other potential concerns about learners and apprentices. These include health issues, individual progress on programme and attendance. Staff review this information frequently to ensure there are appropriate arrangements and interventions in place to keep learners and apprentices safe.

Leaders have appropriate oversight of safeguarding. They ensure that staff carry out relevant safeguarding training and conduct appropriate pre-employment checks so they know that staff are safe to work with learners.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all learners receive clear and frequent careers advice and guidance about opportunities beyond South Yorkshire that more fully meet their potential aspirations.
- Ensure that staff use the results of initial assessment to improve learners' and apprentices' English and mathematical skills.
- Ensure that staff provide apprentices with clear information and guidance, throughout the apprenticeship, about how to achieve high grades in their examinations.
- Ensure that all employers are actively involved in reviewing apprentices' progress so that that they know how they can support apprentices in the workplace.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53749
Address	65/67 Silver Street Doncaster DN1 1JL
Contact number	01302 813900
Website	www.oracle-uk.com
Director	Diane Logan
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 March 2018
Main subcontractors	Not applicable

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations manager, 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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