

Inspection of Master Cutters Limited

Inspection dates:

22 to 24 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Master Cutters Limited, trading as the Hair Academy, provides apprenticeship training for apprentices in Ashford, Kent. At the time of inspection, there were 53 apprentices training as hairdressers and barbers on the level 2 hairdressing professional apprenticeship standard. Most apprentices were aged 16 to 18 years old.

Master Cutters Limited do not work with any subcontractors.

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

All apprentices benefit from a mutually respectful and highly professional training environment that helps them to learn. They demonstrate high standards of behaviour and conduct that clients expect and value. They are polite and courteous, providing clients with high levels of customer service. Apprentices are prepared well for careers in the hairdressing and barbering industry.

Apprentices are motivated highly to learn and succeed. They attend well and recognise the importance of reliability and dependability that employers expect. Apprentices aspire to achieve highly and know the standards expected of them to do so. They have clear visions for their futures which include owning their own salons and barber shops and working as hairdressers on cruise ships.

Apprentices develop quickly their knowledge of how to keep themselves physically healthy. They know the correct postures and movements to adopt and how to position and adjust equipment appropriately when cutting hair. As a result, they work safely to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injury. For example, they place equipment on the correct side, adjust chairs to the appropriate height and stand straight when cutting and styling hair.

Most apprentices develop their understanding of equality and inclusion well. They value the opportunities to work with and learn from clients with dementia and those with disabilities. Apprentices plan for clients' visits so that they can move easily around the salon and they explain carefully what they will be doing during appointments. As a result, apprentices provide a welcoming and respectful service for all clients to enjoy.

Apprentices embody the values needed to work successfully in the hairdressing and barbering industries in modern Britain. They are respectful and tolerant of others and they understand the rules they must follow to ensure the safe use of chemicals and products. For example, apprentices take care in their consultations with clients to understand skin and hair types before undertaking any treatments and they recommend products that best suit customers' needs.

Apprentices behave with integrity, they cooperate well with others, and they learn to communicate effectively. Clients are happy with the service that apprentices provide and apprentices show that they are ready for employment. For example, apprentices ensure clients are comfortable, consult them carefully to understand their requirements and provide them with sensitive advice on how to nourish hair that has been repeatedly bleached.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to stay safe, including online. They are very aware of the risks they may face working as young hairdressers and barbers and how they might mitigate against these. They are confident that staff would deal rapidly and appropriately with any concerns they have.

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

Leaders and managers have established successfully a curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours apprentices need to work in the hairdressing and barbering industries. They have a sharp understanding of employers' needs to recruit skilled barbers and hairdressers and they know the changing trends in fashion well. As a result, they provide programmes of learning for apprentices to develop the hair and barbering skills that employers and customers are looking for.

Leaders have not ensured all apprentices benefit from a programme of planned activity to help them develop and discover their interests and talents, and learn the skills they need to become involved in their communities.

Leaders use initial assessment very effectively. They provide apprentices with a robust induction to hairdressing to ensure they have chosen a career path that is right for them. Tutors assess apprentices' skills and knowledge carefully and adapt their programmes of learning where needed. They identify apprentices' additional needs correctly and put appropriate support in place to help them. As a result, apprentices know the demands of working as a hairdresser or barber, and are supported well to make the rapid progress expected of them.

Expert tutors use their extensive experience to provide apprentices with relevant and varied training to build their knowledge, skills and behaviours quickly. They order learning thoughtfully so apprentices have a deep understanding of the basics of hair and client care before moving on to cutting and colouring. When apprentices develop mastery in their techniques, they advance to more complex cuts and styling. As a result, apprentices become highly skilled and demonstrate the talents they need to cut and style hair to the standards and speed expected by clients and employers. For example, apprentices learn to blow dry hair without causing damage. They move on to cutting, colouring and perming and when fluent in their skills they take on advanced styling such as graduated bobs and asymmetric cuts.

Tutors check apprentices' knowledge and understanding effectively. They ensure apprentices' foundation knowledge and skills are correct, so errors do not permeate their work. As a result, apprentices master the underpinning knowledge and skills of hairdressing and barbering they need to be competent. For example, tutors correct apprentices' technique when drying hair so that they learn to lift the hair up and out and avoid wet hair resting on dry hair.

Tutors review apprentices' progress effectively to plan their future learning and align closely the on- and off-the-job training. They provide employers with feedback on apprentices' progress that they value highly. Employers use the feedback to engineer opportunities for apprentices to practise newly learned skills at work. As a result, apprentices develop confidence in their technical skills and customer service.

Tutors use assessment effectively so that apprentices gain new knowledge quickly and further improve their skills. They ensure apprentices understand topics thoroughly, linking theory to practice well. As a result, apprentices have a deep understanding of hairdressing and barbering and apply what they learn competently. For example, tutors probe apprentices' understanding of contact dermatitis and apprentices explain the preventative measures they can take to avoid harm such as the use of barrier cream and removal of jewellery to protect their hands.

Leaders recognise that apprentices' achievements have been too low and below their high expectations. Apprentices who remain on the programme, including those with additional needs, achieve well. Leaders have taken action to improve recruitment through robust induction and monitoring of progress. As a result, apprentices' achievements have improved, though it is too early to see if the impact of leaders' actions is sustained.

Leaders provide apprentices with a well-considered programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance. Apprentices give thought to their career goals and what they might do to achieve their aspirations. They learn to write CVs to a high standard, they know how to search vacancies and find the employer that is right for them and they benefit from useful advice to set up their own businesses. As a result, apprentices are prepared well for their next steps.

Leaders rightly recognise that arrangements for independent oversight require improvement. They have recently established a steering group of employers, tutors, apprentices and alumni to provide challenge and support for senior leaders. As a result of helpful challenge, senior leaders have acted rapidly to improve induction and monitoring of apprentices' progress which has already brought improvement. However, it is too early to see the full impact of these actions on apprentices' experience and achievement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Strengthen governance arrangements to provide greater support and robust challenge to senior leaders.
- Improve the robust monitoring, intervention and support for apprentices so that they remain on the programme and achieve successfully.
- Ensure that apprentices have opportunities to develop the skills they need to play an active part in their communities.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2654245
Address	The Clergy House Churchyard Ashford TN23 1QG
Contact number	01233 660990
Website	www.thehairacademy.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Colin Binder
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Training 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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