Inspection of Education for Industry Group

Inspection dates: 24 to 27 March 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Education programmes for young people	**Good**
Adult learning programmes	**Outstanding**
Apprenticeships	**Outstanding**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Information about this provider

Education for Industry Group, known as Fashion Retail Academy (FRA), is an independent learning provider with charitable status in the City of London. Since the previous inspection, FRA has grown significantly. In September 2024, FRA moved to larger premises and increased its number of learners and apprentices by around a third.

FRA teaches a range of fashion business and design courses and apprenticeships from level 2 to level 4 to around 2,000 learners and apprentices. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 1,600 learners aged 16 to 18 years old, 120 adult learners and 300 apprentices.

Subjects with the largest number of young learners include level 3 fashion business and retail with 644 learners and level 3 creative practice with 445 learners. Adult and young learners choose from a range of level 4 courses, with the largest being the level 4 digital merchandising and the level 4 buying and merchandising fast track course. Most apprentices study either level 4 buying and merchandising assistant or level 3 retail team leader apprenticeships.

There were 187 young learners studying mathematics GCSE and 71 studying English GCSE alongside their vocational subjects.

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

Learners and apprentices learn in a friendly, supportive environment. Learners like attending their lessons and workshops in person two days each week because it gives them time for work and family commitments on the other days. Apprentices say that even though most of their training is online, their tutors make sure that they still feel like part of a close community.

Learners and apprentices enjoy the project-based learning that forms the core of most courses. Industry experts from major fashion and retail brands give talks and masterclasses or set tasks that replicate those in the fashion and design sectors. Learners and apprentices quickly develop relevant skills, such as how to use trend forecasting software, that help to enhance their projects.

Learners and apprentices learn about inclusive fashion. For example, level 3 retail team leader apprentices complete a project to design and plan new clothing ranges for diverse customer groups, such as an Eid summer collection. This helps to promote the inclusive culture that learners and apprentices enjoy at FRA.

Learners develop important professional and academic behaviours through their studies, such as accurate referencing, clear communication and how to use artificial intelligence ethically. Learners and apprentices work well together in lessons and workshops. They are polite and respectful to each other, staff and visitors.

Learners and apprentices appreciate the rich range of extra opportunities available to them in addition to their courses. Activities such as budgeting sessions, yoga, mindfulness and enterprise events help learners develop confidence, independence and employability skills. Staff arrange frequent trips to galleries and exhibitions that give learners inspiration for their projects as well as widening their interests. Exposure to different places and people helps young learners to become more confident about living and working independently in the future.

While most young learners are very happy with their education, a small minority say that their course has not met their expectations. They feel that studio spaces are sometimes too crowded and that resources such as styling mannequins and photography equipment are not easily accessible. In these cases, the quality of young learners' experiences is not what they were hoping for.

Staff care deeply about learners' and apprentices' safety and well-being and take good care of them. Staff teach young learners how to travel safely in London. Learners and apprentices feel safe.

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

Leaders and managers have designed an ambitious curriculum that meets skills gaps in the fashion retail industry. They use their extensive industry contacts well to keep their courses up to date and relevant. As a result, learners and apprentices are well placed to acquire the qualifications, skills and knowledge they need to gain employment or move into higher-level courses at FRA and beyond.

Curriculum managers plan course content and assessments in a logical order. In level 4 digital marketing, for example, at each stage of their course, teachers design projects that require research, presentation, referencing and product design skills. The projects include increasingly demanding opportunities for learners to practise what they have learned. Learners are then ready to apply and consolidate these skills in their work placement settings and future careers.

Teachers make effective use of testing to check what learners and apprentices know when they start their course. They then adapt their teaching to target areas where learners and apprentices need more help. In mathematics GCSE, this practice is less well developed. Sometimes, teachers give learners the same work to do regardless of where they have gaps in their skills or knowledge. In these cases, learners do not make good enough progress.

Leaders provide a very good programme to help teachers develop their practice. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are subject specialists who have a wealth of industry experience in retail, business and design. Apprenticeship teachers are adept at relating tasks to apprentices' workplaces because they link the activities clearly to industry methods and standards. Teachers explain key concepts and tasks clearly. They check learners' and apprentices' understanding frequently using effective questioning to recall and recap prior learning. This helps apprentices and learners to remember important knowledge and specialist terminology.

Teachers and tutors give learners and apprentices valuable feedback. For example, in fashion business and retail courses, teachers give detailed written explanations of how students could improve project work and have follow-up conversations to clarify learners' next steps. Learners act well on their feedback to produce project work of an increasingly high standard. The quality of learners' and apprentices' practical and written work is extremely high.

Teachers and specialist learning assistants support learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Teachers adapt their resources and assessments so that learners and apprentices with SEND are not disadvantaged. For example, learners on level 3 visual communication and styling courses who struggle to write extended essays produce their assessed work on sound files and video. When needed, learners have extra time to do their projects. This contributes to good outcomes for learners with SEND.

Learners achieve well. They often gain merit and distinction grades where these are available. In some level 3 subjects, such as fashion and business retail, and across adult learning programmes, the proportion of learners who attain distinction grades is very high. However, too few young learners who need mathematics GCSE at grade 4 or above gain the knowledge and skills they need to improve their grades.

Teachers prepare apprentices extremely well for their end-point assessments. Leaders have taken suitable steps to make sure that apprentices remain on their programmes and achieve their qualifications. This has contributed to high rates of achievement, and a high proportion of apprentices gaining distinction grades. Most apprentices gain promotions and permanent positions in the fashion retail sector.

Teachers, careers staff and external specialists provide learners and apprentices with the information they need to make informed decisions about their next steps. They feel very well prepared for their futures in fashion related careers or higher education. The vast majority of learners move on to positive destinations. Young learners gain places on related degree courses at university or move into higher-level courses at FRA. Adult learners have exceptionally good outcomes. Most gain employment that meets their aspirations within the fashion retail or design sector.

Leaders monitor the quality of the education they provide very effectively using robust tracking and quality assurance processes. They give governors accurate and useful information which enables them to develop an astute understanding of FRA's strengths and areas for development. Governors have appropriate experience, knowledge and skills for their roles. They use these to provide constructive challenge to leaders to bring about improvements to the provision.

Leaders are suitably responsive to areas of low performance. For example, they reviewed their level 2 provision following a dip in outcomes last year and have implemented changes that have already had a positive impact. In GCSE mathematics, leaders have identified that attendance and results are too low and have made positive changes. This has led to improvements, but the subject remains an area of focus for governors and leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the proportion of young learners who achieve their mathematics GCSE qualifications at grade 4 and above.
- Take appropriate action to manage the expectations and improve the experience of the small minority of young learners whose courses do not meet their expectations.

Provider details

Unique reference number	57839
Address	Electra House 84 Moorgate London EC2M 6SE
Contact number	02073072354
Website	www.fashionretailacademy.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Lee Lucas
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Dates of previous inspection	20 to 23 September 2016

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of FE, 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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