



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1998

Sarah Hodge
Hairdressing Group

SUMMARY

The Sarah Hodge Hairdressing Group provides good-quality training in hairdressing. Trainees have clear progression routes, within the group, to senior posts as managers or trainers. Trainees are included in an effective staff appraisal system. Equal opportunities within the company is satisfactory. Management of training is good. There is good communication between trainees, trainers and assessors. Quality assurance is good, but informal.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hair & beauty	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good working relationships between staff and trainees
- ◆ trainees' experience is enriched by regular attendance at external events
- ◆ rapid development of practical skills by trainees
- ◆ high levels of trainee achievement, including key skills
- ◆ exemplary teamwork and customer care demonstrated by trainees
- ◆ high levels of individual support valued by trainees
- ◆ effective procedures for complaints and appeals
- ◆ views of trainees are sought and acted on to improve training
- ◆ good recruitment procedures

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor delivery of theory training
- ◆ lack of written feedback to trainees on assignments and projects
- ◆ no accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ initial assessment is not formalised



INTRODUCTION

1. The Sarah Hodge Hairdressing Group is a group of six salons in Somerset and Devon. It has trained its own trainees under direct contracts with Somerset Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) since April 1987. The original salon in Taunton was acquired by the current proprietors in 1987, along with the five staff. Today, the group has six salons and 48 full-time staff. The salons are in Bridgewater, Chard, Honiton, Taunton, Tiverton and Wellington. The Taunton salon is also the company office.
2. The group is well known in the hairdressing trade, with staff regularly taking part in competition work and photo-shoots. The group is a member of the Schwarzkopf Professional Hairdressers' Club, featuring in trade articles about the club. It is also a member of the Hairdressers' Employers' Association.
3. The group competes for trainees with several other private training providers in the area and several local colleges of further education. At the time of inspection, there were 25 trainees, including nine modern apprentices and 16 national trainees. Unemployment varies across the towns where salons are situated, from as low as 2.1 per cent in Ilminster to 6.6 per cent in Glastonbury. This compares with the national average of 5.1 per cent. There are few people from minority ethnic groups, making up only 0.25 per cent of Somerset's working population. The number of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 44 per cent for Devon and 48.9 per cent in Somerset, compared with the national average of 53 per cent, for 1997.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The Sarah Hodge Hairdressing Group started its first self-assessment in May 1998. The training co-ordinator, who had the best overall picture of the group's training activities, produced the report, with inputs from the management team. The original self-assessment report was produced against the interim inspection framework and was updated, in July 1998, using *Raising the Standard*. The company had difficulty in measuring itself against other hairdressing trainers and in clearly identifying appropriate strengths and weaknesses. Generally, inspectors agreed with the main findings of the report. Some of the strengths included represented normal practice, while others were understated. Weaknesses were insufficiently identified in the report, particularly in hairdressing, trainee support and quality assurance, where none were listed. Two of the five grades awarded by inspectors remained the same as those presented in the self-assessment report, while three others were graded higher.

5. A team of three inspectors spent a total of nine days at the company during September 1998. Inspectors examined company, TEC and awarding body documents. They spent one day in each of the six salons where trainees are based. Inspectors interviewed staff from Somerset TEC, management and training staff from the company and all trainees. They examined assessment records, trainees' work and portfolios, observing 16 instruction sessions. The following table shows the grades awarded to the instruction sessions observed:

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Hair & beauty	2	11	3			16
Total	2	11	3	0	0	16

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hair & beauty (hairdressing)

Grade 2

6. The Sarah Hodge Hairdressing Group currently has 25 young people in training. All trainees are employed by the company. Sixteen trainees are working towards national traineeships and nine are working towards modern apprenticeships. The six salons are of a high standard, in terms of staffing, equipment and product availability. All trainees enjoy a valuable learning experience which is demonstrated by their commitment, good attendance and rapid progress in gaining qualifications. The self-assessment report did not adequately identify the strengths and weaknesses of hairdressing provision. A higher grade was awarded by inspectors than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality, closely supervised practical training
- ◆ high achievement rates for trainees
- ◆ rapid development of practical skills by trainees
- ◆ effective use of key skills
- ◆ good standard of trainee portfolios
- ◆ wide range of extra learning opportunities
- ◆ exemplary teamwork and customer care
- ◆ clear routes for trainees' progression

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some ineffective delivery of theory
- ◆ lack of suitable accommodation for the effective delivery of theory training
- ◆ insufficient written feedback to trainees on assignments and projects
- ◆ some poor trainee awareness of assessment procedures

GOOD PRACTICE

After 12 weeks' training, a trainee was doing foil work, using three colours on long hair. The trainee carried out a client consultation which included contra-indications to colouring during pregnancy and the selection of the three colours to be used with the aid of colour charts. A client consultation card and a diagnostic analysis of the client's hair were completed. The trainee was assisted by the trainer, who acted as a junior throughout the process. The results of the colouring process were excellent.

7. All trainees and salon staff are active in the promotion of health and safety in the workplace. Equipment is routinely sterilised; checklists are used to record cleaning practices; all styling positions have individual timers to ensure correct processing time for use of hairdressing chemicals. Each trainee is aware of his/her assessor, and structured opportunities for learning are in place. Practical training is focused on hands-on experience, guided by the trainer and senior stylist. Models are provided and time allocated to each trainee, in order for skills to be practised and mastered. Blocks of time are booked with a stylist and trainer, so that they can be with the trainee and model.

8. A record to show achievement and progress of individual trainees is kept on the wall of the six salons' staff areas. Each time a trainee works on a client, the details are recorded by name. This actively promotes competition among the trainees to progress quickly. It is also used to demonstrate, to the individual trainee, his/her rate of progress and the spread of practical tasks required. The sheets are updated on a fortnightly basis. If trainees move salons to cover staff absence, their training is not disadvantaged. Training tasks are set, recorded and reviewed every two weeks, by assessors. Each trainee has regular opportunity to meet his/her assessor, and dates are mutually agreed on at one meeting for the next. At these meetings, the assessor and trainee agree about which theoretical and practical aspects of the NVQ should be attempted next, and dates are set and documented on the appropriate form. On completion of the tasks, they are signed off by the assessor, and new targets are set.

9. Most trainees have previously worked for the group as Saturday staff. At the onset of full-time employment, many of the initial skills, such as shampooing, neutralising and conditioning, have already been achieved. This enables the trainees to advance quickly to more complex skills at an early stage.

10. Product manufacturers regularly provide training sessions for trainees on their

products. All new trainees mix permanent colours in each of their salons, and some apply semipermanent colours on behalf of the stylist for whom they work, all under close supervision.

11. All trainees have the opportunity to attend a hair-cutting course at a top London salon. Trainees find this a confidence-building learning experience. All trainees are encouraged to come forward with any good ideas which they have which might benefit the daily working of the salon and its staff. These ideas, if taken on by the company, are recognised by rewards such as bottles of champagne, half a day's extra holiday and hairdressing equipment. A trip to EuroDisney was given to staff who had done particularly well in the current year. All trainees are supported throughout their training by the individual attention of stylists, managers and other, more experienced, trainees. The group actively promotes customer care, and all trainees play their part in producing a caring environment for clients. All trainees are seconded periodically to the group's various salons in order to gain experience of varying clientele and of working with other people.

12. Key skills are implemented at the beginning of the training programme. Numeracy is offered at NVQ level 1 and is completed within the first three months of training. The acquisition of these key skills ensures that trainees are able to deal safely with the dispensing of chemicals and to carry out financial transactions accurately. The package used to develop trainees' key skills is mapped to hairdressing practices and terminology. This enhances trainees' learning experience, as all the tasks involved are relevant. The exercises in the pack are structured so that trainees realise the need for numerical accuracy when dealing with chemicals, especially when colouring hair.

13. Second-year trainees present a fashion show at Christmas to all of the group's employees. They are required to style hair which portrays the theme of a party – a prize is given to the winner. Trainees find this an exciting experience which stretches their skills. Their planning includes hairstyle, selection of model and clothing. Those who exhibit flair have the chance to participate in professional fashion-shoots as part of the work of the group.

14. All of the trainees' portfolios are of a good standard and contain evidence of individual approaches to the acquisition of the NVQ. Photographs, diagrams and supporting text provide a variety of evidence which shows how styles are achieved. All portfolios are clearly indexed and labelled, ensuring ease of access for both trainee and assessor. Trainees have a good range of well-presented evidence in their portfolio. All trainees are aware of their planned programme of learning. They receive appraisals every six months, and any staff development needs are addressed and identified. Each trainee knows when he/she should complete the NVQ level 2 and whether he/she can progress to NVQ level 3. The opportunities available for progression are understood by all staff and trainees, should they wish to work towards them. Most stylists have been with the company for a long time and act as rôle models to trainees who are interested in progressing to training or to management positions with the company.

15. The theory element of the NVQ is not delivered in a structured way. There is no

structured scheme of work for trainees to follow, and this sometimes leads to confusion. One external company which delivered a theoretical session was unaware of trainees' previous knowledge. Learning opportunities are sometimes missed. The theory aspect of the NVQ is organised so that trainees study in the salon environment. A specified time is allocated for individual trainees to study, and staff areas are used to complete portfolio work. Although the salons are of a high standard, most have no suitable accommodation for private study or portfolio-building. There are continual distractions. Learning resources in individual salons are limited. Only one book is systematically used in all six salons. The company has advanced plans in place to remedy the weaknesses in theory training.

16. Trainees produce written evidence to address the theoretical aspect of the NVQ. This written evidence is assessed, but no written feedback is given to trainees. When work is returned to them, assessors give verbal feedback, and sometimes, if an aspect of the written work is incorrect, the assessor writes the correct answer. This reduces the learning opportunity for trainees, as the verbal feedback is sometimes forgotten. Trainees are not as active as they might be in taking practical NVQ assessments. They regard assessments' timing to be the responsibility of their assessors and do not drive the assessment process themselves. Trainees are aware of the company's assessment documents, but the official NVQ log books are not used effectively by trainees to record their completed units. Achievements and retention rates are good, at around 80 per cent.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

17. The equal opportunities policy is defined in a company manual which is readily available in all salons. The policy meets the requirements of Somerset TEC. The manual is an integral part of the induction process, and all trainees and staff sign a document every six months to confirm that they have read it. Procedures for complaints, appeals and a code of conduct are included in this manual. Recruitment of trainees relies mainly on school careers visits and local advertisements for Saturday staff. The current promotional material demonstrates a female bias, but this material is in the process of being redesigned to encourage male applicants. There are male stylists who have progressed from being trainees and are effectively used as rôle models in recruitment. The group always ensures that either male trainees or staff play a leading rôle in recruitment events. Barbering courses are offered to encourage men to the industry. Complaints and appeals procedures are clearly understood by trainees. All salons have a complaints book which is used effectively by trainees. There is a code of practice for relationships among trainees, staff and clients, and it is clearly adhered to. Of 25 trainees, 21 are women and four are men. The inspection generally validated the self-assessment report, although additional strengths and weaknesses were identified. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ action being taken to attract more male trainees
- ◆ effective procedures for complaints and appeals
- ◆ code of conduct effectively operated

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor implementation of equal opportunities policy
- ◆ promotional literature does not promote equal opportunities
- ◆ lack of equal opportunities awareness among trainees and staff
- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities issues

18. Although an equal opportunities policy is in place, it is not reviewed. There are no guidelines for its implementation, and no system to ensure that trainees and staff understand the policy's implications. There is no staff development system to raise awareness of equal opportunities issues, but the policy is discussed at management meetings. Advertisements in newspapers do not promote the group as an equal opportunities employer. There is a lack of awareness among staff and trainees of equal opportunities issues. There is no monitoring of the policy's effectiveness.

Trainee support

Grade 2

19. Trainees receive regular individual support. They receive individual induction by either the training co-ordinator or the manager/trainer in their salon. All trainees participate in the company's appraisal process. Trainees work within a caring environment, with staff committed to supporting trainees in all areas of training. Inspectors confirmed the grade indicated by the company, but identified weaknesses not included in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective, well-planned induction
- ◆ frequent, good-quality reviews of trainees
- ◆ high levels of individual support
- ◆ trainees' achievements celebrated by several methods
- ◆ trainees included in the formal staff appraisal system

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ initial assessment not formalised
- ◆ no policies or procedures for accreditation of prior learning

20. Trainees receive a comprehensive and well-designed induction pack which

supports their one-to-one induction in the individual salons. The induction programme is well planned, and trainees clearly remember it and value the process. Induction is monitored and evaluated using a checklist, completed by all trainees. Key skills are introduced at the start of their programme, and trainees find them relevant to supporting their development as hairdressers. Trainees receive daily support from their salon manager and are visited fortnightly by the training co-ordinator. The two owners of the group visit all the salons at least once a week and provide valuable extra support for trainees. Trainees are welcomed when they go to work at other salons in the group. Progress is effectively reviewed at least every two weeks by the training co-ordinator. These review sessions are generally carried out on an individual basis. Trainees sometimes request extra sessions which are always made available. The company places much emphasis on individual support which trainees value as a key part in their progress.

21. Several incentives are offered to trainees to support and motivate them, including prizes and a variety of visits to enhance their training experience. Hairdressing equipment, except for scissors, is provided for trainees by the company. All trainees have an appraisal every six months carried out by one of the two owners. Their progress is discussed and they are encouraged to identify future progression within the company. Trainees with personal problems feel able to discuss them with a member of staff and are supported in solving them.

22. No formal initial assessment is carried out, in either key skills or practical work. Many trainees joining the training programme have previously worked as Saturday staff and already possess basic hairdressing skills. This is not considered or used in the planning of individual training programmes, although trainees are encouraged to carry out self-assessment of their existing practical skills. Opportunities are missed for such trainees to progress quickly by the use of accreditation of prior learning, as there is a lack of awareness of this process.

Management of training

Grade 2

23. All staff read and sign the company manual, containing policies and procedures, every six months. All staff and trainees are aware of the contents of the manual and of where other information is kept. The proprietors hold regular minuted monthly meetings with their salon managers and training co-ordinator. Brainstorming and target-setting are features of the meetings. All salons and staff are set realistic targets. Action points are acted on. Company staff are highly motivated, and all staff areas are decorated with motivational posters from various management organisations. Internal communication is good, and staff regularly talk to the proprietors. The self-assessment of this area does not fully reflect the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors, and the grade awarded was higher than that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ there are excellent working relationships throughout the company
- ◆ staff understand, and are committed to, the company's strategies and targets
- ◆ effective staff appraisal system in place
- ◆ all staff keep their knowledge and skills up to date
- ◆ staff are set and meet measurable targets for success
- ◆ managers acknowledge the efforts of staff in several ways

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ staff have not been trained to meet all trainees' needs
- ◆ inconsistent management of required hairdressing theory

24. All staff and trainees are aware of the progress being made with training. Trainees and staff are enthusiastic about the group, and there are numerous examples of staff and trainees being given the opportunity to express their views and change salon training and policies. Trainees are encouraged to progress quickly through training. The quality of practical training is generally high throughout the company, reflecting an emphasis on the development of practical skills.

25. Analysis of staff's training needs is generally good. Staff and trainees are appraised by the proprietors on a six-monthly basis. Prior to appraisal, salon managers assess staff on a numerical scale, allowing for measurable target-setting for future improvements. Where interest is expressed in training or management, appropriate staff development is arranged. Occupational skills are updated in several ways: either staff go on courses or companies are brought into the salons. Some of the group's commission generated from hairdressing clients is used to provide training requested by staff. Staff are motivated by some of the rewards available. Staff wear uniforms which effect a corporate image and reinforce the development of professional attitudes by staff and trainees.

26. Staff development has not been provided so that staff can meet the needs of all their trainees. No one is trained to accredit prior learning or to support trainees with dyslexia. There is a difference in the quality of practical and theoretical training. Trainers give little structured formal input, relying heavily on trainees asking stylists for information or finding things out for themselves from textbooks. When product companies visit salons to do training on areas such as hair colouring, they are not briefed on the previous experience of trainees, so that their input might be more structured and meaningful. Data are collected, collated and analysed and are used to inform management decisions regarding the quality of training.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

27. Quality assurance processes are well-established and effective, but are not

formalised. They satisfy the needs of Somerset TEC and the awarding bodies. They incorporate target-setting, monitoring performance and the use of reviews with staff and trainees. The company has not established a systematic process of self-assessment which identifies weaknesses adequately. Subsequently, the first self-assessment report produced by the company lacks rigour and is incomplete in content. The section on quality assurance did not identify any weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ salon staff work to common standards and procedures which are regularly monitored
- ◆ views of trainees are sought and acted on
- ◆ clear targets are set for measuring performance, and these are monitored regularly and updated
- ◆ achievements and destinations of trainees are effectively monitored
- ◆ good recruitment procedures

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formalised quality assurance process
- ◆ self-assessment process is not rigorous

GOOD PRACTICE

Trainees have contributed ideas to the quality assurance process. One trainee produced a checklist with numerical scores for salon professionalism, including personal appearance, which are used in all salons. Another produced a set of guidelines to be followed by trainees when watching stylists working on clients, so that paying clients do not feel that they are being used as training aids.

28. Although there is no formalised quality assurance policy, common standards and procedures are maintained across the company's six salons. These standards are monitored and checked regularly by each salon manager. A further check is made by a group employee who, during visits, completes a performance checklist which covers aspects such as cleanliness and health & safety. These visits are made at random and are unknown to the other salons. Trainees complete questionnaires on their experience of training and are given regular opportunities, in quarterly reviews by TEC staff, to comment on training.

29. The internal verification process is recorded regularly. Extra checks are made on skills, such as shampooing, after competence has been achieved, by observation of the process against a company skills checklist. Recruitment involves interview against a company checklist, to ensure that all potential trainees go through the same process. Performance targets are set regularly, and their achievement is rewarded through several incentives. Staff and trainees are aware of their relative performance and find that the system increases their motivation to perform better. Using company evaluation sheets, trainees review any external courses which they attend or external companies which provide training in the salons. Trainees have ready access to a complaints procedure involving company staff, or to the TEC, at monitoring visits. The company and the TEC are both aware of the reasons for trainees leaving and their destinations. Any points for action which arise from the TEC reviews are acted on by the group.



30. The lack of a formalised quality assurance process does not have a significant effect on the quality of training. The self-assessment report did not sufficiently identify the company's strengths and weaknesses. The group is aware of the benefits of bringing its quality processes together and instigating a self-assessment process as part of a company quality assurance cycle.