



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 1998

# Positive Approach Academy For Hair

## SUMMARY

Positive Approach Academy For Hair offers good training in hairdressing. Teaching groups are small, which enables all trainees to receive individual support to aid their progress. All trainees demonstrate good commercial skills, which are well developed at an early stage and are geared to meet the needs of the industry. Internal communication is good, and the company has good working relationships with employers, with whom it meets on a regular basis. Employers are not involved in assessment in the workplace. Equal opportunities issues are well understood and supported by everyone involved in training and, in particular, the grievance procedure for trainees is effective. Key skills are not integrated in training programmes. Quality assurance is satisfactory.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hair & beauty	2

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-staffed provision
- ◆ effective grievance procedures
- ◆ trainees demonstrate good commercial skills
- ◆ effective internal and external communication systems
- ◆ good employer understanding and support of equality of opportunity

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no quality assurance strategy
- ◆ underdeveloped key skills
- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment

## INTRODUCTION

1. Positive Approach Academy for Hair (PAAH) is a privately owned company, established in 1984 as Toppers. The name was changed in 1998 to promote a more positive approach to training. The company operates from a purpose-built training centre in Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire. It employs seven staff and has 58 people in training, 56 of whom follow a youth training programme and two are in adult training.
2. The company's training is funded through Humberside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Trainees work towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in hairdressing at levels 2 and 3 and in key skills at levels 1 and 2.
3. Most trainees are from Scunthorpe and the surrounding district. The largest areas of employment are in steel, poultry and telecommunications. In June 1998, unemployment stood at 5.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.1 per cent.
4. The number of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 37.9 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent, for 1998. Twenty per cent of local employers recruit from school leavers aged 16 to 17, and 52 per cent recruit from those aged 18 to 24. Fifteen per cent of school leavers in the area joined a modern apprenticeship programme in 1997.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. PAAH produced its first self-assessment report in October 1998. All staff contributed to the content of the report, and employers' views were sought. The report accurately identified some strengths, while others identified were no more than normal practice. Some weaknesses were accurately identified. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses and agreed with the grades proposed for equal opportunities, trainee support and quality assurance, but awarded higher grades for hairdressing and management of training.

6. Two inspectors spent a total of eight days at PAAH during November 1998. They met staff from the training centre, employers and spoke to representatives from Humberside TEC. They interviewed nine employers in the work placements, 23 trainees, met all PAAH staff, visited nine placements and observed four training sessions.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Hair & beauty		4				4
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Hairdressing

### Grade 2

7. There are 58 trainees taking hairdressing programmes, working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Programmes include youth training, national traineeships, modern apprenticeships and adult training. All trainees attend the training centre one day each week, where training covers both theoretical and practical work. The rest of the time, trainees are on salon placements, where they are visited every 12 weeks by PAAH's staff. The company accurately identified some strengths and weaknesses. However, it underestimated some strengths and failed to recognise additional strengths identified by inspectors. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ high trainer-to-trainee ratio
- ◆ flexible learning programme
- ◆ trainees demonstrate good commercial skills
- ◆ innovative training club for employers
- ◆ good achievement rates

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped key skills
- ◆ little work-based assessment

8. Trainees undergo a one-day induction, at which details of their programme are clearly explained, including information on key skills. They receive a planner to identify programme units and projected completion dates, enabling individuals to check their own progress which is also continually monitored by trainers, with training amended to suit individuals' needs. Teaching is of a good quality and delivered to small groups of trainees. The average group size is 10 to 12, the number of trainers working with a group varying between two and three. This applies to both theory and practical sessions. Trainees receive tuition in group sessions and are then encouraged to work at a pace suited to their individual abilities. Trainers provide good support, encouraging trainees to discuss difficulties and ask questions which might not otherwise be raised in a larger forum. Individual support is high in practical sessions, enabling trainees to develop practical skills to a commercial standard at an early stage and providing the type of individual attention required to support those with learning difficulties. More-able trainees also progress at a rate appropriate to their ability. Most assessment takes place during these training sessions at the centre, however, when requested, trainers do visit salons to complete assessments. Currently, no assessment is completed by employers in the workplace; there is some use of witness testimonies to confirm trainees' competencies towards accreditation. However, this is not standard practice in all salons and the system is not understood by all trainees. The company is addressing this problem by offering assessment training to salon employers.

9. Recently, the company set up a 'training club' for employers, designed to ensure that employers are kept up to date with topical issues, including training and new legislation. Activities have also included visits to hairdressing competitions and exhibitions. Through these meetings, one group of salons has worked together to provide on-the-job training for groups of trainees. Each salon hosts a training evening, to which all trainees are invited – training is delivered by the host salon. Training topics are chosen to provide maximum interest, using the specialisation of the particular salon. This broadens trainees' experience and enables them to see a variety of techniques. The club has been in existence for approximately six months; employers are very enthusiastic about it and see it as a long-term activity.

10. Accommodation at the training centre is light and brightly decorated. It is well resourced with appropriate teaching aids; there is sufficient space for the size of group. However, some of the smaller equipment is in a poor state of repair.

11. The company was accredited for the delivery of key skills in April 1998. Key skills were introduced to the training programmes a month later. Currently, they are not embedded in programmes or fully integrated in occupational activities.

12. NVQ achievements are high. Over the last three years, results for people completing training have been between 70 and 100 per cent achieving a qualification.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

**Grade 3**

13. All trainees are told of their rights and responsibilities, under the company's equal opportunities policy, at induction. They are shown the policy, which is then explained to them. Employers are informed about the policy and required to sign an agreement. There are no trainees from minority ethnic groups currently training with PAAH. Ten per cent of trainees are men. The self-assessment report identifies accurately the weakness about gender imbalance and participation by trainees from different backgrounds, but does not reflect the extent to which equal opportunities issues are understood by trainees, employers and staff. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good understanding of equal opportunity issues by employers
- ◆ effective handling and recording of grievances

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate written information given to trainees on equal opportunities
- ◆ insufficient action taken to recruit under-represented groups

14. Employers have a high awareness of equal opportunities issues and display a willingness to encourage young people from all social and cultural backgrounds to join the profession. Trainees' understanding of rights and responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities is satisfactory. The document given to trainees at induction is very brief, is not written in terms which they can readily comprehend and is insufficient for future reference. For example, they are not given a written explanation of what constitutes harassment, which would enable them to refer to it later, if they became concerned about the way in which they are treated.

15. The company is aware of the imbalance in the gender of the trainees and the lack of trainees from minority ethnic groups. It welcomes trainees from under-represented groups, but takes only limited steps to redress the imbalance. It does, for example, always ensure that a male trainee or hairdresser is on its stand at careers events, to encourage male school leavers to consider the occupation. However, there is no systematic approach to identify and monitor actions which could increase the recruitment of the under-represented groups. PAAH has a system for recording

grievances raised by trainees and resulting action. The system has been in operation since 1993 and has been consistently maintained since then.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 3**

16. The training environment at PAAH is a caring one, and staff work hard to support trainees in all aspects of training. Trainees are interviewed at the centre before starting the programme. Interviews are then arranged with local salons. There is a one-day induction programme, followed by regular visits to the placement; reviews also take place at the centre, every six weeks. The self-assessment report accurately identified some strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors identified additional ones and agreed with the grade proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high level of personal support
- ◆ frequent communication with employers
- ◆ effective matching of trainee to salon

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate initial assessment
- ◆ no systematic assessment/accreditation of trainees' prior experience
- ◆ no careers guidance available to trainees

17. Trainees receive a simple numeracy test at induction which is very basic and identifies only those trainees with extreme difficulties. There is no system to identify trainees' literacy or other training support needs. Therefore, staff rely on trainees recognising their own needs and requesting appropriate help. Working relationships between trainers and trainees are supportive and positive. However, trainers are not qualified or sufficiently experienced to provide specialist assistance, should it be required.

18. Good support is provided for trainees in gaining salon placements. Trainees are coached in interviewing skills, including personal presentation and questioning techniques. Trainees appreciate the tutoring which they receive before attending salons for interview; it is helpful in confidence-building. This is important because it is their first experience of work, for many of them, after leaving school. If a mismatch occurs between trainee and salon, trainees return to the training centre, full time, until a suitable salon can be found. During this time, additional training is provided. Some trainees are unable to relate to the world of work immediately and

need to develop appropriate social skills, as well as improve practical techniques. This additional support is provided effectively at the centre.

19. When trainees identify problems, they are dealt with quickly and satisfactorily. This efficiency is appreciated by both trainees and employers. Employers are contacted regularly and invited to visit the training centre whenever they wish. They are encouraged to share concerns or queries with PAAH.

20. All trainees are employed and, therefore, expected to remain in employment when their programme is complete. However, there is no careers guidance provided or information supplied on further progression routes. Trainees are aware of possible career paths and consider that it would be helpful to have further information, even if they have no immediate intention of using it. Trainees' prior experience is not systematically assessed or accredited towards competency. It is used in the most obvious cases only – where trainees have transferred from another training scheme, for example. This means that some trainees repeat work unnecessarily.

## **Management of training**

## **Grade 2**

21. PAAH is managed on a daily basis by the owner and by a full-time manager. There are four training staff, only one of whom works for PAAH on a full-time basis. There is a part-time financial administrator who is not involved in training. The other staff and managers are experienced in training, as well as in the hairdressing sector. The contact with employers is mainly the responsibility of the director and manager. Most management decisions are made during informal discussions, rather than at formal meetings.

22. The annual TEC contract sets the targets for the numbers of trainees achieving each month. The manager monitors actual achievement. A single page in the front of each portfolio records the progress of individual trainees, and a copy of this progress page is kept centrally. Trainees' review forms are used to record review outcome and future action. Staff receive an annual appraisal, at which performance is reviewed and development needs identified. Inspectors identified additional strengths to those identified by PAAH and concluded that the combined strengths significantly outweigh the weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

### ***STRENGTHS***

- ◆ experienced and very competent staff and managers
- ◆ priority given to the standard of training
- ◆ good communications with employers and with staff
- ◆ effective system for monitoring individual trainees' progress



### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient recording of management decisions
- ◆ trainees' reviews not always used to plan progression

23. PAAH is well managed and efficiently organised. The management team is very capable. It is apparent to staff, employers and trainees that the company's priority, as well as the standard of training delivered, is the level of support offered. As a small organisation, communications between managers and staff are mainly informal, but frequent and very effective. The staff feel involved and well supported. PAAH has good links with work-placement employers. Managers are in constant contact with the salons. Both PAAH and the employers have a clear understanding of each other's needs.

24. The method of monitoring trainees' progress is clear and simple, allowing trainees and trainers to see, at a glance, the progress made and the assessments still to be completed. A centrally maintained copy of the monitoring sheet ensures that managers are also aware of individual trainees' progress. The information is not consolidated in a central chart, so tracking information is not as prominent as it might be. Trainees' reviews record useful information. In some cases, they identify, in detail, the actions which the trainee agrees to take before the next review, such as to practise a hair-styling technique. Other reviews do not identify future actions, reducing the value of the trainee review as a means of planning progression.

25. The small size of the management team means that decisions are made rapidly and informally. The company sees little need for scheduled meetings or written minutes. Key decisions tend not to be recorded. While the lack of such records has not caused problems in managing the organisation, there is the potential for important decisions to be misunderstood or not followed up.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

26. PAAH has a documented quality assurance policy, brief set of quality assurance procedures and a variety of systems to address key training processes. Questionnaires are used to obtain feedback from trainees. In addition, a committee of trainees has been established at which they are invited to give feedback on training. The committee has been meeting since July 1998. Employers' feedback is collected through the close contact between the company and salons. The training club for employers is intended to act as a feedback mechanism, in addition to the other functions which it serves. Employers are asked to contribute suggestions for improvements to training. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment grade, although the self-assessment report itself does not accurately reflect the quality assurance arrangements in the organisation.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good use of trainees' feedback
- ◆ close involvement of employers with PAAH leads to improvements
- ◆ effective regular review of operations
- ◆ PAAH's high awareness of its strengths and weaknesses

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no strategy for quality assurance
- ◆ insufficient documented systems and procedures
- ◆ little formal action-planning

27. The quality assurance policy does not contain a coherent strategy for implementing quality assurance procedures. Documented quality assurance procedures exist, but are brief and incomprehensive. They identify most of the key training processes, but do not specify them in sufficient detail to be sure that the required standard is maintained. In many cases, there are other forms and documents, such as the induction programme or the trainee review form, which define the process explicitly. Internal quality audit arrangements concentrate on the documents required by the TEC, rather than on the training processes. No records of internal audits are maintained. The company has decided that a quality system which meets the ISO 9000 quality standard is inappropriate, but the current systems are not sufficiently detailed for their purpose. The systems and training processes are reviewed at appropriate intervals. Improvements are made to training, as a result of review. There is a lack of planning in the internal verification process, although sampling of assessments for verification is satisfactory.

28. Informal feedback is received from trainees, but this information is not recorded. The formal feedback system, based on questionnaires, has been established for several years. It has been reviewed and improved over that period. The introduction of the trainees' committee is a significant development, intended to generate more useful feedback from trainees. Trainees value the opportunity to contribute ideas and suggestions through this route. It is too early to judge its effectiveness. The close working relationship between PAAH and employers allows a useful flow of information which helps to maintain and improve the standard of training. Employers' feedback is collected from the recently established training club, as well as through discussions at the reviews carried out.

29. Staff were involved in the self-assessment process and so have a good understanding of its conclusions. The company has a high level of awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, but this is not reflected in the content of the self-assessment report. Action-plans have been included in the report, but there is no history of the use of action-planning to effect continuous improvements.