

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Hair Academy South West
Date of visit: 24 June 2008

Context

Hair Academy South West (HASW) is a limited company established in 1987. Originally, the company traded as the Sarah Hodge Group with its own group of nine hairdressing salons. HASW was set up in 2004 to include the offer of training to other salons in Somerset and Devon. The number of external salons with apprentices receiving training from HASW has increased year on year to the present 25 salons. The company has one training academy based in Taunton. There are currently 85 apprenticeship learners funded through the Dorset and Somerset Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Apprenticeship contracts account for 90% of HASW's training. Other training includes a contract with Somerset County Council to provide hairdressing training at level 1 to six pupils in years 10 and 11. A small group of privately funded learners attend the academy to gain qualifications or to extend their practical skills.

Two senior managers head a team of eight tutors, 18 assessors and two internal verifiers, all of whom also work as part-time stylists in commercial salons. One senior manager is responsible for quality improvement, equality, diversity, and health and safety. The other is a principle tutor and is responsible for the co-ordination of programme management and training. The principle tutor also takes the primary role for business management.

At the previous inspection, HASW was awarded grade 2 for retail and commercial enterprise – hairdressing, and grade 3 for leadership and management, equality of opportunity, and quality improvement.

Achievement and standards

What developments have taken place since the previous inspection to improve achievement and standards?	Strength maintained
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The previous inspection judged that the success rates had improved significantly and were good. Retention was also good. HASW has maintained this strength. Advanced apprenticeship success rates for the year 2006/07 are 90% which is outstanding. Apprenticeship success rates for the same year are 68% which is good. Timely success rates are particularly good and have equalled the overall success rates each

year for four years. Current learners are making good progress towards completion of the framework and the trend continues so far for the year 2007/08.

The portfolio work is at least satisfactory. Learners achieve additional units where appropriate and take part in both local and regional competitions. One learner achieved third place in a recent regional competition.

Quality of provision

What improvements have been made to meet the needs of learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs?	Reasonable progress
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HASW has made improvements to better meet the needs of individual learners. In particular, HASW now plans its training programmes to provide literacy and numeracy support as needed. Learners follow a carefully structured and timetabled programme of learning to achieve their qualifications. HASW are aware that this could create problems for some learners and they now have a skills for life strategy supported by a number of measures, monitored in an action plan.

Tutors identify individual needs during induction through a mixture of testing and discussion with tutors. As a feature of the new skills for life strategy, HASW has introduced the use of a diagnostic test to establish key skills levels and identify any literacy and numeracy support needs. HASW is a member of the dyslexia association and has a planned training programme for all tutors to support the skills needed to work more effectively with learners with dyslexia. Tutors have access to a growing resource bank which includes colour overlays, read rulers, literacy and numeracy exercises. Many learners have difficulty spelling and tutors now display examples of more complex terminology around the salon walls so that learners can familiarise themselves with correct spelling.

What changes have been made to improve the planning to meet individual needs?	Reasonable progress
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HASW has revised its individual learning plans to include more specific literacy and numeracy target-setting and action planning. An experienced and occupationally competent review officer has been appointed with specific responsibility to carry out all reviews with learners. Through these new arrangements the relationship with HASW and employers has improved and the quality of reviews are more consistent. A recent learner survey confirmed that they are fully satisfied that the review process enables them to identify their own progress, plan their next targets and discuss any issues from the workplace.

Personalised learning and support sessions are now available for all learners. Tutors have timetabled periods at the beginning and end of each day to allow them to offer one to one support. HASW offer additional tuition to allow learners to practice or

improve their skills such as cutting techniques or timing. A recent learner survey confirmed that 96% felt able to access one to one support if needed. Tutors follow up the non-positive responses and make adjustments to teaching sessions or access to support if necessary.

How have the training and assessment opportunities improved for learners?	Reasonable progress
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Training and assessment practice has improved since the inspection. HASW has revised lesson planning documentation to ensure that tutors take account of individual needs. Tutors now identify and record the opportunities to develop or demonstrate wider skills such as verbal and non-verbal communication, presentation, IT, and following instructions. All tutors have achieved, or are working towards, a teaching or vocational training qualification. HASW has appointed an academy consultant to improve access to employers and the number of placements. To improve access to assessment for all learners HASW has appointed ten new assessors.

Assessment and internal verification arrangements of the NVO are satisfactory. Assessments include observation, questioning and the formal tests required by the awarding body. If learners need extra help with assessments, tutors offer verbal questioning which learners can tape or they can have someone to write down their answers. HASW is currently investigating the use of e-portfolios to reduce the amount of written work required.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made to develop the self-assessment process and the post inspection action plan?	Reasonable progress
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The previous inspection judged that the self-assessment process was satisfactory overall but was too descriptive with some inaccurate judgements about the strengths and areas for improvement. HASW has improved the self-assessment process through better use of feedback from employers and learners to inform the judgements in the self-assessment report. HASW manages the collection of learner and employer feedback to better fit into the quality improvement cycle. It displays the analysis of the feedback on charts to learners and communicates it to employers using summary leaflets to check the accuracy before inclusion in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report is now more critical and better informed.

HASW produced the post-inspection action plan soon after the previous inspection. It is comprehensive including all areas for improvement as well as targets to assure the maintenance of the identified strengths. The plan is carefully monitored to ensure its

targets are met and it also includes other actions identified by HASW to improve the quality of provision.

What has been done to improve the management systems for the apprenticeship programmes?	Reasonable progress
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The previous inspection judged that HASW had not developed the management systems sufficiently to meet the needs of the new business. HASW has made progress in all the areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection. HASW has strengthened staff appraisals to identify strengths and areas for improvement for each member of staff in line with the business needs of the company. To better ensure the adequacy and currency of staff qualifications, HASW has formulated a five year plan which clearly identifies all the continuing professional development needs for the staff and the company. HASW has introduced appropriately timetabled and mandatory standardisation meetings to improve the consistency of assessment practices. Each learner now has a training diary which logs the on-the-job training. This new arrangement provides HASW with a clear view of what each learner is doing at work and what additional training is required to support progression. Team meetings now include discussions about individual as well as overall learner achievement rates and targets.

What progress has been made to improve the promotion of health and safety?	Reasonable progress
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The previous inspection judged that HASW did not promote health and safety sufficiently during some aspects of client services. HASW rectified most of these issues at the time of the inspection which included the sterilising of equipment, taking care measuring colours and the use of protective gloves. HASW has completed a comprehensive health and safety self-assessment report for the current year and includes a discussion of health and safety issues at the bi-monthly quality improvement meetings. As a feature of the five year development plan, staff training includes courses on a range of health and safety issues. HASW conducts risk assessments for each work-placement and each learner is required to complete a health and safety checklist to assure the safety of the learner and their compliance to health and safety procedures in the workplace. Each learner receives health and safety training in the first three months of training followed with recap questions and spot checks during lessons to check learners' compliance and understanding. HASW train learners thoroughly in the use of client records and tutors monitor all aspects of health and safety as part of the assessment process.