



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Training for Success and  
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in  
Belfast College of Training and  
Education Limited

Report of an Inspection  
in May 2012

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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## **PART ONE: SUMMARY**

### **1. CONTEXT**

1.1 The Belfast College of Training and Education Limited (Belfast College of Training and Education) is a privately owned organisation and is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department) to supply training in the professional and technical area of beauty therapy in the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes.

1.2 The Belfast College of Education and Training Limited was established in Queen Street, Belfast in 1980 offering specialist training in beauty therapy. In 2001, the organisation merged with Hair Academy. Although operating as two separate companies under the contracts with the Department, they currently trade as the Academy Hair and Beauty Training School. The Belfast College of Training and Education provides training in beauty therapy on three sites in Northern Ireland; the main premises in Brunswick Street, Belfast have been operational since 2010, the Mill Street premises in Newry since 2008 and the Springwell Street premises in Ballymena since 2011.

1.3 A minority of the trainees and apprentices have achieved at least a grade C in their General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) in English (27%) and mathematics (14%) on entry to the programmes; around 20% of them hold at least four GCSEs at grade C or above. A significant minority of the trainees and apprentices (47%) had no formal qualifications on entry. Consequently, a majority of the trainees and apprentices have essential skills needs in literacy and numeracy. In addition, a small number (7%) of the trainees have been identified with a range of emotional, social and behavioural problems including mental health issues.

1.4 All of the apprentices currently on the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes are existing employees who have been recruited directly from a range of local beauty salons.

### **2. PROVISION**

2.1 At the time of the inspection, the Belfast College of Training and Education was providing training in the professional and technical area of beauty therapy for 208 trainees and apprentices; 182 in Belfast, 17 in Ballymena and 9 in Newry. Of these, 49 trainees were registered on the Skills for Work strand of the Training for Success programme, 132 on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand and 27 apprentices on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. The number of trainees and apprentices registering in the Belfast College of Training and Education almost doubled in September 2011.

2.2 At the time of the inspection, all the trainees and apprentices were undertaking training at a level beyond the minimum level required by their framework in the essential skills of literacy and numeracy. The trainees and apprentices are given the enrichment opportunity to undertake an essential skill in information and communication technology (ICT) as part of a pilot organised internally.

### **3. THE INSPECTION**

3.1 On the basis of the information available to the Department, including recent Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reports, the Belfast College of Training and Education was identified as a supplier organisation with a very good record for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning. The organisation is recognised as having the capacity for sustained self-improvement, and was selected as a suitable organisation for a short inspection.

3.2 In May 2012, the Inspectorate carried out a short inspection of the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes in the Belfast College of Training and Education. The purpose of the inspection was to assess the accuracy and reliability of the organisation's self-evaluation and improvement planning processes and to determine whether their evaluations of the quality of the provision match the findings of the Inspectorate. A team of inspectors observed a total of eleven training sessions and interviewed 93 trainees and apprentices in both directed and workplace training. Extended discussions were held with senior managers, tutors, trainees and apprentices. In addition, 23 employers and workplace supervisors were interviewed by the inspection team. The team also examined samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work, portfolios of evidence, personal training plans and reviews. The organisation's self-evaluation report, development plan and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

3.3 The arrangements for the inspection of care, guidance and support and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups includes the opportunity for trainees and apprentices to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings by the inspection team with groups of trainees across the organisation's sites. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were issued to the trainees and apprentices, all of which (100%) were returned to the Inspectorate, and 79 contained additional written comments. The returns show that the trainees and apprentices in the Belfast College of Training and Education appreciate the very good support they receive from staff, the good match between the workplace training and their target qualifications, the progress they have made in developing their personal and employability skills and the support they receive in developing individual career plans. The Inspectorate has reported the outcomes of the questionnaires and the discussions held with trainees to the Managing Director.

#### **4. MAIN FINDINGS**

4.1 In the area inspected, the quality of education and training provided by the Belfast College of Training and Education is outstanding. The organisation has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- outstanding leadership and management of the provision, underpinned by a strong commitment to the achievement of excellence in beauty therapy training;
- very good quality of teaching, training and learning, including the outstanding enhancement opportunities provided to the trainees and apprentices;
- very good quality of the work placements visited and the excellent match between the directed and work place training;
- outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support which is well matched to meet the individual needs of the trainees and apprentices;
- very high standards of professional and technical skills demonstrated by most of the trainees and apprentices;

- outstanding accommodation, physical resources and equipment provided to support the delivery of the programmes; and
- very good average retention rates, and outstanding achievement and progression rates at 100%.

**Table of Performance Levels**

<b>Overall performance level</b>	Outstanding
<b>Contributory performance levels</b>	
Leadership and Management	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding
Quality of Provision for Learning	Very Good

## **PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION**

### **5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

5.1 The quality of the leadership and management of the provision, at all levels, is outstanding. The senior management team are committed fully to providing the highest quality of training, and have established robust quality assurance arrangements to maintain high quality training and very good standards of work by the trainees and apprentices. The leadership and management are underpinned by a distinctive ethos of pastoral care, support and guidance. The ethos, mission and core values of the Belfast College of Training and Education are clearly articulated to trainees, apprentices and parents/guardians, and are embedded throughout all aspects of the organisation.

5.2 The quality assurance arrangements are outstanding. The senior management team collate and monitor regularly key performance data such as attendance, timekeeping, trainees' and apprentices' progress, retention, achievement and progression rates. Through robust self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, the Belfast College of Training and Education reviews and continually improves the training programmes to ensure they meet the needs of the trainees and apprentices and those of the beauty industry. Recent improvements include a parental involvement strategy to ensure that parents' views are well represented in the self-evaluation process. An in-depth analysis of the information from all key stakeholders is undertaken and appropriate actions taken to address any shortcomings identified. The quality assurance arrangements include the very good use of tutor observations which helps to promote improvement through the sharing of good practice and to develop capacity. The Inspectorate has a high degree of confidence in the organisation's self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes to enhance and inform further improvement in their provision.

5.3 All of the staff are appropriately qualified, with specialist skills and industry experience to support effectively the trainees' and apprentices' directed training; they are highly committed to the personal and social development of all of the trainees and apprentices.

5.4 The quality of the training accommodation in the Belfast College of Training and Education is outstanding. The trainees and apprentices are provided with high-quality industrial standard equipment and physical resources to support the development of their occupational skills.

5.5 The quality of the leadership and management of the essential skills provision is very good. The essential skills team is strongly collaborative, works cohesively and is supported well by management. A number of initiatives have been introduced by the essential skills co-ordinators to support the embedding of the essential skills, and in particular to support the development of the trainees' and apprentices' reading skills. These initiatives include the introduction of a small library style reading area in each centre where appropriate books and magazines are provided. The use of Kindle and the e-dictionary have also been introduced to support reading skills. In addition, management and tutors encourage the trainees and apprentices to access their work online, from home or the workplace, in order to prepare for their essential skills sessions. The essential skills tutors are encouraged and supported well by management to undertake a range of continuous professional development activities which include opportunities for the development of collaborative planning and the sharing of practice.

## 6. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

6.1 The overall quality of the provision for learning is very good. There are outstanding opportunities for the trainees and apprentices to develop an extensive range of practical skills and achieve additional qualifications which are highly relevant to the current beauty industry. The planning for learning is very good, schemes of work and detailed, well-written lesson plans are standardised across all of the centres. The emphasis on the evaluation of learning by the trainees and apprentices is a notable feature of the provision.

6.2 The Belfast College of Education and Training provides a supportive and inclusive ethos in directed training sessions in which mutual respect, tolerance and understanding are promoted. The sessions engage the trainees and apprentices by building upon their own specific interests and abilities and very good opportunities are provided to celebrate success.

6.3 The quality of the directed training observed ranges from satisfactory to very good, with almost all (91%) of the sessions being good or better and most (82%) being very good. The sessions are planned thoroughly; the tutors use a broad range of appropriate teaching and learning strategies to engage and support the trainees and apprentices in their learning, and information and learning technology (ILT) is used very effectively to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The trainees and apprentices have excellent opportunities to work with an extensive range of high quality skincare and make-up products. The vocational tutors work hard and to good effect to provide contextualised opportunities for the trainees and apprentices to develop and apply their essential skills during both theory and practical classes, promoting the use of presentations and peer assessment. The assessment and internal verification procedures are very rigorous and effective.

6.4 The quality of the provision for learning in the essential skills of literacy and numeracy is good. All of the tutors work hard to engage and motivate the trainees and apprentices and to build their confidence. Most of the work is contextualised appropriately and builds on the professional interests of the trainees and apprentices. A good range of training and learning methodologies is used, particularly in literacy. These include the innovative introduction of a range of technology enhanced approaches to learning which, while still in their early stages, provide additional motivation for the trainees and apprentices. Most of the trainees and apprentices report that they enjoy their essential skills, that they have an improved understanding of literacy and numeracy, and that they feel more confident in undertaking their assessments.

6.5 The essential skills tutors use a range of initial, diagnostic and formative assessment processes which are mostly used well to plan for training and learning. However, for a minority of trainees and apprentices (13%) who enter training with a grade D in GCSE in English and/or mathematics, the progress towards level 2 in the essential skills is overly slow and, on occasions, too much time is spent on the consolidation of existing knowledge. In these instances, the outcomes of the initial and diagnostic assessment processes need to be used more effectively to influence the pace of learning and progression.

6.6 The Belfast College of Education and Training has identified a clear and coherent entitlement for trainees and apprentices across all of the programmes on offer. In particular, the trainees on the Skills for Work programme benefit from a well-crafted programme which offers significant breadth, balance and challenge. All of the trainees and apprentices have access to a wide range of appropriate activities, including anti-bullying training and the opportunity to participate in competitions, photo-shoots and presentations from guest speakers who are leading experts in beauty products and application techniques.



6.7 The quality of the trainees' and apprentices' personal training plans is very good. Initial assessment is used effectively to set clear and individualised targets. The processes for monitoring and reviewing trainee and apprentice progress are rigorous and robust. The communication channels with employers are excellent, they contribute well to the personal training planning process and are involved very effectively in setting targets across the training periods against which progress in the trainees' and apprentices' acquisition of occupational skills can be measured.

6.8 The quality of the support for trainees and apprentices is outstanding. The Belfast College of Education and Training is very effective in providing additional learning support for those trainees who have been identified as having additional support needs. The Belfast College of Education and Training has established effective links with an appropriate range of external agencies including Disability Action, Include Youth, and Cedar Foundation to help to support the needs of these trainees. This additional support supplements and complements the high levels of day to day support provided within the organisation, by staff at all levels. A high priority is given to the emotional health and well-being of the trainees and apprentices.

6.9 A representative of each group of trainees and apprentices is elected to present the learners' voice within the organisation and to influence the decisions that affect them in their training. All of the trainees and apprentices interviewed in focus groups responded positively about their training experiences and commented on the high levels of pastoral support and care provided by the training staff. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures are in place, including safeguarding, pastoral care, positive behaviour policies, anti-bullying, and e-safety. The policies and procedures are user friendly for trainees, apprentices and parents/guardians and are written in an inclusive, positive and constructive manner. The policies and procedures are applied consistently across all three of the centres.

6.10 The quality of careers education, information and guidance is very good. The Belfast College of Education and Training uses to good effect the well-established links with employers to inform trainees' and apprentices' career planning and to provide them with appropriate opportunities for work related learning. All trainees and apprentices receive effective personal career planning to help them make informed choices and to set appropriate goals.

6.11 On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the organisation has very good arrangements in place for safeguarding. The arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007.

## **7. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

7.1 The achievements and standards in the Belfast College of Education and Training are outstanding. The managers and tutors set very high expectations and standards for the trainees and apprentices. As a result, they demonstrate high, professional standards of behaviour and personal presentation. Attendance at directed training sessions is mostly very good.

7.2 The trainees and apprentices are highly motivated and enthusiastic. The tutors and managers provide an environment in which the trainees and apprentices are encouraged and supported to achieve to their full potential. Consequently, the trainees and apprentices have a very high regard for the Belfast College of Education and Training and they value highly all aspects of their training programme.

7.3 Most of the trainees and apprentices demonstrate very high standards of professional and technical skills, in both directed training and in the workplace. All the trainees and apprentices are provided with outstanding opportunities to develop further their technical and employability skills through the provision of an extensive range of additional courses and qualifications, including spray tanning, nail art, body wraps, massage and training in the prevention of contact dermatitis.

7.4 Nearly all of the work placements are of a very good quality and the trainees and apprentices are provided with excellent opportunities to develop their professional, technical, personal and transferable skills.

7.5 For the minority of trainees not on placement, there is an extended programme which includes work sampling and opportunities for placement in the organisation's own commercial salons. Within this programme, there is a strong emphasis on the development of employability skills and relevant personal and transferable skills, as well as practical skills in beauty treatments such as manicure, massage, fantasy make-up and complimentary therapies.

7.6 The standards demonstrated by most of the trainees and apprentices in the essential skills of literacy and numeracy are very good, and a minority 17%, are achieving beyond the minimum level required by their framework. Most of them are developing good standards in their written work and very good standards in their spoken and inter-personal skills. Almost all of the trainees' and apprentices' portfolios are very well organised and contain clear evidence of progression in their learning. They receive very good, constructive feedback on their progress and a reward system is used to good effect for level 1 trainees. It is noteworthy that more critical and evaluative feedback is provided for those trainees and apprentices working at the higher levels.

7.7 During the period 2007/08 to 2010/11, the overall retention rate on the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes is very good at 87%; the achievement and progression rates are outstanding at 100% and 98% respectively. The outcomes in literacy and numeracy are also outstanding at 100%.

## **PART THREE: CONCLUSION**

### **8. CONCLUSION**

8.1 In the area inspected, the quality of education and training provided by the Belfast College of Training and Education is outstanding. The organisation has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## APPENDIX

**Table 1: Training for Success: Averages over the last four years (2007-2011)**

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention rate %	Achievement rate %	Progression rate %
Skills for Work	77	86%	100%	94%
Programme-Led apprenticeships	150	88%	100%	99%
Overall totals	227	87%	100%	97%

**Table 2: ApprenticeshipsNI: Averages over the last four years (2007-2011)**

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention rate %	Achievement rate %	Progression rate %
Level 2 Apprenticeship	43	88%	100%	100%
Level 3 Apprenticeship	32	81%	100%	0%
Overall totals	75	85%	100%	100%

**Table 3: Overall averages during the period 2007-2011 across all programmes**

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention rate %	Achievement rate %	Progression rate %
Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI	302	87%	100%	98%

- Note:**
1. All data sourced from the Belfast College of Training and Education Limited at the time of the inspection.
  2. Achievement rates are for the full-framework.

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