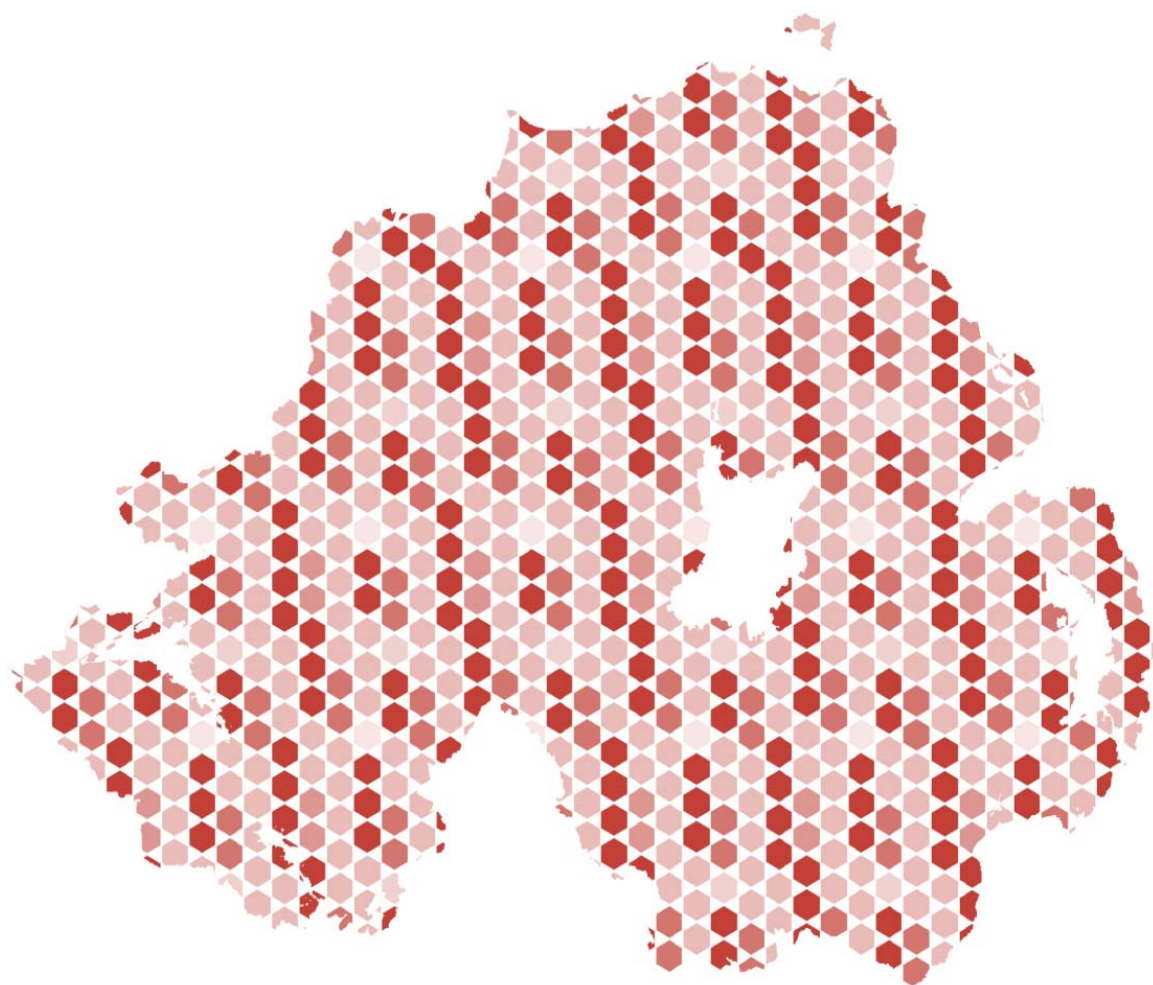


# TRAINING INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

The Hair Academy, Belfast

Report of an Inspection  
in April 2010

## CONTENTS

Section	Page
<b>PART ONE: SUMMARY</b>	
1. CONTEXT	1
2. PROVISION	1
3. THE INSPECTION	2
4. MAIN FINDINGS	3
<b>PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION</b>	
5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	4
6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	5
7. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	5
<b>PART THREE</b>	
8. CONCLUSION	7
9. KEY PRIORITY FOR DEVELOPMENT	7

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%

All the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by Hair Academy.

### Grading System

The Education and Training Inspectorate use the following performance levels (grades) in reports:

Performance Level	Grade	Descriptor
Outstanding	1	Outstanding characterised by excellence
Very Good	2	Consistently good; major strengths
Good	3	Important strengths in most of the provision. Areas for improvement which organisation has the capacity to address
Satisfactory	4	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
Inadequate	5	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
Unsatisfactory	6	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

## **PART ONE**

### **SUMMARY**

#### **1. CONTEXT**

1.1 The Academy of Hair and Beauty (Hair Academy) is a privately owned company which was originally established in 1980 as the Limestone Youth Training Project. Since 1996, the organisation has been operating under the training name of Hair Academy offering National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3 in hairdressing. In 2001, a merger took place between Hair Academy and the Belfast College of Training and Education (BCTE), with the latter offering NVQs in Beauty Therapy. Although operating as two separate companies under the ApprenticeshipsNI contracts with the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department), they currently trade as the Academy of Hair and Beauty.

1.2 Hair Academy's main premises are located in Rosemary Street in Belfast City Centre. The company has operated from the Rosemary Street premises since 1996. Most (76%) of the trainees and apprentices attending Rosemary Street are recruited from the Greater Belfast area, while the remaining 24% travel from Carrickfergus, Bangor, Larne, Lisburn, Antrim, Ballymena and Magherafelt. In September 2007, Hair Academy acquired premises in Mill Street, Newry. Most (68%) of the trainees and apprentices attending the Newry Academy are recruited from the Newry and Mourne area, while the remaining 32% of them travel from Newcastle, Castlewellsan, Crossmaglen and Killeel.

1.3 Hair Academy is contracted by the Department to supply training in the professional and technical area of hairdressing in the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes, at level 2 in Belfast and levels 2 and 3 in Newry. Overall leadership and contract management is the responsibility of the Managing Director, who is supported by two managers responsible for the day-to-day operation of the two centres in Belfast and Newry. The main priority for Hair Academy is to improve workforce skills in hairdressing in order to meet industry needs.

#### **2. PROVISION**

2.1 At the time of the inspection, Hair Academy was providing training in the professional and technical area of hairdressing to 470 trainees and apprentices, of whom 376 were in Belfast and 94 in Newry. Of these, 57 were registered on the Skills for Work strand of the Training for Success programme, 120 were registered on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme and 293 on the level 2 and 3 ApprenticeshipsNI programme. A further 22 trainees were completing their training under the Modern Apprenticeship programme, with only one trainee remaining on the Traineeship Programme.

2.2 Nearly all of the trainees and apprentices (93%) are female. The trainees and apprentices enter the training programmes from a diverse range of backgrounds. There is considerable variation in their academic qualifications and prior experience in the workplace, on entry to the programmes. Of the 57 trainees on the Skills for Work programme, 41 (71%) had no formal qualifications on entry, two (4%) had four General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications or equivalent at grades A\*-C, and 14 (25%) had achieved GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades D-G. Of the 120 apprentices on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme, 38 (31%) had no formal qualifications on entry, 28 (24%) had four GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A\*-C, and 54 (45%) had

achieved GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades D-G. Of the 293 level 2 and 3 apprentices on the ApprenticeshipNI programme, 65 (22%) had no formal qualifications on entry, 96 (33%) had four GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades A\*-C, and 132 (45%) had achieved GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades D-G. There were no graduates on the programmes.

2.3 Around 96% (55) of the trainees on the Skills for Work programme, 72% (86) of the apprentices on the Programme Led Apprenticeship and 68% (198) of those on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme are undertaking essential skills qualifications in both communication and application of number. The remainder of the apprentices are exempt from the essential skills as a result of their prior achievements in English and mathematics.

2.4 There are currently 42 staff working across the two Hair Academy centres. In addition to the Managing Director and two centre managers there are 14 hairdressing tutors, seven assistant hairdressing tutors, four essential skills tutors and four monitoring and support staff. There are also ten administrative and auxiliary staff.

2.5 The trainees and apprentices are visited in the workplace on a six-weekly basis by monitoring and support staff, who are knowledgeable about, and experienced in, the hairdressing industry. The apprentices attend Hair Academy in Belfast and Newry for either one or two days each week depending on the programme designed to meet their individual needs. Directed training and learning is provided by occupationally-competent hairdressing tutors and by essential skills tutors. Trainees and apprentices on the Skills for Work and Programme-Led Apprenticeship programmes have access to a varied and very appropriate provision which includes employability skills, technical workshops, personal presentation skills, first aid, and healthy living. They also undertake an additional beauty therapy unit to enhance their employment prospects. It is noteworthy that, despite the economic downturn, around 70% of the trainees on the Skills for Work programme are in work placements for two days each week.

2.6 The essential skill of information and communication technology (ICT) at level 1 was introduced to the framework for hairdressing in October 2009. Hair Academy has explored several models for the delivery of ICT and has appropriately decided to deliver it as an integrated part of the provision. Ten members of staff are currently undertaking the ICT Key Skill at Level 3 and are due to complete in June 2010. Appropriate additional resources, schemes of work and lesson plans are in place for the delivery of this third essential skill.

### **3. THE INSPECTION**

3.1 In April 2010 the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out an inspection of the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes in Hair Academy. The provision for trainee and apprentice support, careers education, information, advice and guidance, pastoral care and the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults, and the essential skills of literacy and numeracy, was also inspected.

3.2 During the inspection a team of five inspectors observed 147 trainees and apprentices in 28 directed training sessions. They also observed and interviewed 54 trainees and apprentices in workplace training. Extended discussions were held with the Managing Director, the two office managers, administrative staff, and hairdressing and essential skills tutors. In addition, 30 workplace mentors and employers were interviewed by the inspection team. The team also examined samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work, portfolios of evidence, and personal training plans (PTPs). The organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

3.3 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults 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 and apprentices. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were issued to trainees and apprentices, 146 (97%) of which were returned to the Inspectorate. Almost all of the questionnaires returned contained positive additional written comments, and the trainees and apprentices particularly valued the excellent support they receive from staff, the very good match between the directed and workplace training and their target qualifications, and the quality of the feedback on their progress they receive from the staff. The Inspectorate has reported the outcomes of the questionnaires and the discussions held with trainees and apprentices to the Managing Director.

#### 4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 In the area inspected, the quality of education and training provided by Hair Academy is outstanding. The educational and pastoral needs of the trainees and apprentices are being very well met. The current leadership of the organisation demonstrates the capacity to maintain high standards.

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- outstanding quality of the leadership and management, at all levels;
- excellent standards demonstrated and achieved by almost all of the trainees and apprentices in their professional and technical programmes;
- excellent overall retention, success and progression rates at 90%, 99% and 97% respectively over the past three years;
- very good or outstanding quality of the teaching, training and learning in most of the sessions observed;
- very effective links and engagement with employers and the wider hairdressing industry; and
- outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support provided for the trainees and apprentices.

**Table of Grades**

<b>Overall performance level (grade)</b>	Outstanding (1)
<b>Contributory performance levels (grades)</b>	
Leadership and Management	Outstanding (1)
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding (1)
Quality of Provision for Learning	Outstanding (1)

## **PART TWO**

### **OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION**

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

5.1 The leadership and management of the ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success programmes is outstanding at all levels in the organisation. There is a clear, learner-centred vision and a well-developed culture of self-evaluation and planning for continuous improvement. Excellent support is provided to the Managing Director by the owner who is also the Chair of the Management Committee. At a strategic level, standardised and rigorous processes for the design, delivery and evaluation of training and assessment have been developed and effectively implemented. As a result, rigorous quality improvement arrangements are in place across the training provision.

5.2 The Managing Director provides outstanding leadership which is effective in promoting high standards and harmonious working relationships. Excellent relationships, characterised by mutual respect, have been established between staff, trainees and apprentices, employers and clients. There are effective channels of communication between staff at all levels and clear evidence of strong and effective teamwork.

5.3 The centre managers, tutors and monitoring and support staff display a strong commitment to their work. The recently appointed assistant tutors, all of whom are practicing hairdressers, provide good support and assistance to the hairdressing tutors in directed and practical training sessions and enhance significantly the learning experiences for the trainees and apprentices. The hairdressing and essential skills tutors work together flexibly and effectively to plan, integrate and deliver the provision. As a result, very good use is made of the trainees' and apprentices' professional and technical area to help them develop and apply meaningfully their essential skills.

5.4 Staff at all levels in the organisation have high expectations of the trainees and apprentices, and provide them with outstanding levels of support. The development and use of an electronic student welfare record system by management ensures that staff meet effectively the needs of trainees and apprentices in a consistent yet confidential manner.

5.5 The respective roles of trainees, apprentices, tutors, workplace supervisors and employers are clearly defined. Hair Academy offers a well-designed and integrated programme of training. A high priority is given by management to the development of the trainees' and apprentices' essential skills. Very effective links have been developed with employers and the wider hairdressing industry and the trainees and apprentices benefit significantly from this broad spectrum of professional and technical expertise and support.

5.6 The arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning are rigorous and robust. They include well-developed, systematic processes for obtaining regular feedback from trainees, apprentices and employers. Management information data is collated and analysed regularly, and used effectively to identify areas for improvement. An appropriate quality improvement cycle has been evolved to allow management and staff to regularly monitor, review and take action to improve the provision. The quality assurance procedures include regular observation of teaching, training and learning, and the tutors are provided with clear and constructive feedback on their performance.

5.7 The quality of the physical resources is excellent. The Newry centre has been equipped to an exceptionally high standard and careful thought has been given to the strategic location of this recently opened centre. There has also been significant investment in modern salons and industry standard equipment in the Belfast centre. Hair Academy has

also invested in good quality information and learning technology equipment, including electronic whiteboards in the training rooms. Across the organisation, there is an excellent range and quality of resources to support the development of the apprentices' occupational competences and their essential skills.

## **6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

6.1 Almost all of the trainees and apprentices achieve very good standards in their work with customers. They are highly motivated and keen to achieve their target qualifications. Most report that their confidence has increased significantly as a result of their training. All of the apprentices are developing a very good understanding of the current practices in hairdressing, as well as health and safety in the workplace.

6.2 Almost all of the trainees and apprentices are making good progress in their learning, at a pace appropriate to their prior learning and experience. They are developing well their personal presentation skills in relating to others, and in using their initiative appropriately. The trainees and apprentices are developing excellent hairdressing skills, in line with their level and stage of training.

6.3 The standards of the written and oral communication of most of the trainees and apprentices are mostly good. They are able to talk confidently about their training and experiences in the workplace. Almost all of the trainees and apprentices benefit from and value their essential skills training. In the Newry centre, the trainees and apprentices are grouped appropriately into classes according to their level, ensuring that all of them are sufficiently challenged in their work. A small number of apprentices in the Belfast centre are not challenged sufficiently in their essential skills work.

6.4 Over the past three years, for the period 2007-2010, the average retention, success and progression rates for the Training for Success Apprenticeships and the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes are excellent at 90%, 99% and 97% respectively.

6.5 The overall success rate for essential skills across the same period is excellent at 100%.

## **7. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

7.1 The planning for the design and delivery of training is excellent and is effective in promoting coherent and cohesive training experiences across the apprenticeship programmes. The procedures for initial assessment and induction of the trainees and apprentices are rigorous and effective.

7.2 In most of the training sessions observed, the quality of the training and learning was very good or outstanding. Of the 28 training sessions seen, 23 (82%) were very good or outstanding. The hairdressing and essential skills tutors prepare the sessions well and use an effective range of strategies to engage the trainees and apprentices in their learning and develop their practical skills, knowledge and understanding of the hairdressing industry. They provide very good support and guidance, are flexible in their approach and are very aware of the trainees' and apprentices' individual needs. There are excellent opportunities for trainees and apprentices to engage in competitions, photo-shoots and hair shows. The directed training in Hair Academy is enhanced through the very good use of influential visiting speakers and presenters from the hairdressing sector, including former trainees and apprentices, key employers and product representatives.



7.3 The provision for the essential skills of literacy and numeracy is well-planned, with good resources to support the training and learning. The tutors focus not only on the assessment of the trainees' and apprentices' previously acquired skills, but also on their development. The relationships between staff at all levels are effective in ensuring that the essential skills are integrated effectively into the professional and technical qualifications. In the Belfast centre, the action-based activities in application of number, for a small number of the apprentices, are too prescriptive and do not provide them with sufficient opportunities to choose personal topics of interest.

7.4 There is an excellent match between the workplace training, the trainees' and apprentices' roles and responsibilities, and their target qualification. The quality of most of the work placements is very good. Almost all of the trainees and apprentices are in work placements or employment which provide excellent opportunities to develop a broad range of occupational skills in cutting, blow drying, colouring and up-styling. Hair Traffic work extremely hard to ensure that relationships with the employers are excellent. The employers have a well-developed understanding of the trainees' and apprentices' training programmes and assessment requirements. The employers are clear about their roles and responsibilities and most are involved fully in setting targets for, and reviewing the progress of, the trainees and apprentices across the training periods. Regular visits by the monitoring staff ensure that very good channels of communication are maintained.

7.5 The quality of the personal training plans (PTPs) is very good. They are tailored to meet the personal, social and work-related development needs of the trainees and apprentices. They contain clearly defined targets and outcomes which help prepare the trainees and apprentices for progression to higher level training, further education or employment. The plans are highly individualised and are effective in identifying the trainee's or apprentice's progress towards their target qualifications. The PTPs are reviewed on a six-monthly basis by management, and feedback is provided to each trainee and apprentice on their progress in all elements of the training programme, including essential skills.

7.6 The procedures for assessment and internal verification and for monitoring, tracking and reviewing the trainees' and apprentices' progress towards achievement of their frameworks are very effective.

7.7 The monitoring officers and tutors discuss progression pathways with the trainees and apprentices and a comprehensive programme of guest speakers and external agencies ensures that the provision of information advice and guidance promotes effective career planning, including progression to higher levels of education and training.

7.8 Although Hair Academy engages the services of external support agencies for a small number of trainees and apprentices, the outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support, in addition to the implementation of excellent in-house intervention plans, ensures that the needs of almost all trainees and apprentices are met by Hair Academy staff.

7.9 Hair Academy promotes effectively the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults. The arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007. Additional training in this area has been organised for staff and relevant managers.

## **PART THREE**

### **8. CONCLUSION**

8.1 In the professional and technical area inspected, the quality of the training provided by Hair Academy is outstanding. The educational and pastoral needs of the apprentices are being very well met. The current leadership of the organisation demonstrates the capacity to maintain high standards.

### **9. KEY PRIORITY FOR DEVELOPMENT**

9.1 Hair Academy needs to take account of the following key priority:

- ensure that employers are kept informed of new and emerging qualifications in order to maintain the very good links and effective collaborative arrangements which underpin and support the current high quality provision.

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