

Inspection of Francesco Group (Holdings) Limited

Inspection dates: 4 to 7 November 2024

Overall effectiveness **Outstanding**

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Francesco Group (Holdings) Limited is a national training provider specialising in teaching hairdressing. The provider has hairdressing academies in Stafford, Birmingham and Poole. At the time of inspection, 237 apprentices were enrolled in either the level 2 hairdressing professional or the level 3 advanced and creative hair professional apprenticeships. Around three-quarters of apprentices are aged between 16 and 18. The provider does not work with any subcontractors.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices' behaviour and conduct are exemplary. Leaders create a culture of high expectations in training centres and align these clearly with the professional behaviours expected by the hairdressing industry. Apprentices demonstrate exceptional skills, creativity and professionalism in their work. Almost all apprentices move on to successful careers in hairdressing.

Apprentices' attendance to sessions is high. Leaders set high expectations for attendance and punctuality and monitor these carefully. This focus means that apprentices quickly develop the knowledge and skills that they need to be successful in the workplace. Apprentices are committed to their studies and are rightly proud of the excellent standard of hairdressing they produce.

Apprentices develop the character and confidence that they need to work in the hairdressing industry. Many apprentices enter internal competitions such as the foil Olympics, and in a few cases, they succeed in highly prestigious national competitions. Educators teach apprentices about resilience, preparing them to deal with negative feedback or client compliments. Apprentices flourish as hairdressers.

Apprentices feel safe and know who to go to should the need arise. Apprentices learn about topics such as extreme misogyny and online safety. They have a solid understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and they can recognise the signs of those who may be at risk. Apprentices understand the dangers of knife crime and county lines.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum that exceeds the apprenticeship requirements. They use their extensive industry knowledge to supplement a curriculum that inspires apprentices to learn a broad range of skills. For example, apprentices studying level 2 hairdressing learn a portfolio of precise haircuts that, when combined, create complex creative styles. This is in addition to those mandated in the apprenticeship. Apprentices become highly skilled hairdressers.

Leaders have implemented an effectively structured curriculum that helps apprentices quickly become helpful in the salon and develop their skills over time. Apprentices studying level 2 hairdressing professional start by learning basic colouring techniques and simple cuts. This is so they can start to provide hairdressing services under supervision. They then move on to more complex cutting, using razors and applying colouring techniques with foils. At the end of their apprenticeship, apprentices attend a finishing school that helps them further develop fluency in their knowledge and skills, preparing them successfully for their next steps.

Apprentices' complete tests at the start of their apprenticeship that enable educators to assess their initial knowledge and skills accurately. Educators use the results of

these tests to identify immediate learning needs. They evaluate the initial learning that apprentices studying level 3 advanced and creative hair professionals must learn to help them move on to more technically challenging or creative tasks. Because of this, apprentices steadily develop high-level and complex technical skills required for their final assessments.

Educators use highly effective teaching strategies to ensure that apprentices secure new knowledge and skills successfully. At the start of lessons, they recap previous learning. They use helpful questioning techniques, quizzes, group discussions and practical activities to assess what apprentices know and remember. Educators demonstrate new techniques effectively before supporting apprentices in practising new haircuts on mannequins. They consistently correct and challenge apprentices to work with increasing focus and precision. All apprentices who complete their apprenticeship achieve. Of these, many achieve merit and distinction grades.

Educators support apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) successfully to ensure that they meet their potential. Apprentices with dyslexia use coloured overlays. They have access to one-to-one support when needed. In examinations, they use readers and have extra time. This helps apprentices with SEND overcome learning barriers and successfully complete their apprenticeships.

Apprentices are clear about their career routes and the next steps available to them. They understand that they can move on to higher-level training and become creative directors, theatrical hair specialists and cruise ship stylists. Apprentices undertake additional learning in business enterprise that helps them prepare for their next steps, such as self-employment. Most apprentices have clear plans in place for their careers.

Leaders have established appropriate quality assurance processes that help them to identify and resolve areas needing improvement. They use teaching and learning observations effectively to determine educators' development needs. They analyse attendance and achievement data and listen to feedback from apprentices and employers. They have implemented a range of meetings that discuss the quality of training, apprentices' progress and support needs. Leaders are passionate about developing excellent hairdressers and have a strong understanding of their provision.

Leaders have established an effective governance board that challenges and supports leaders to improve. The board comprises of internal managers and external board members with extensive experience in sectors including finance, hairdressing and education. Governors receive useful reports before meetings that they use to ask relevant questions. For example, governors challenged leaders about the benefits and disadvantages of using an external onboarding team to recruit apprentices. As a result, leaders are supported in making the right choices for their provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51895
Address	Woodings Yard 4 Bailey Street Stafford ST17 4BG
Contact number	01785 216183
Website	www.francescogroup.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Ben Dellicompagni
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	2 -5 October 2018
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of operations, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Bev Ramsell, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Ian Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Gray	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector

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