

INSPECTION REPORT

Francesco Group Holdings Ltd

20 August, 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

| SEVEN-POINT SCALE | FIVE-POINT SCALE |
|-------------------|------------------|
| grade 1 | grade 1 |
| grade 2 | |
| grade 3 | grade 2 |
| grade 4 | grade 3 |
| grade 5 | grade 4 |
| grade 6 | grade 5 |
| grade 7 | |

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Francesco Group Holdings Limited is a private company which offers training in hairdressing. Its head office is in Stafford, adjacent to the Francesco Group Academy. There are 22 franchised salons and two salons which the company owns and manages. The salons are in Staffordshire, the West Midlands, Shropshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire. There are 90 learners.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The work-based learning in hairdressing is good. Leadership and management and quality assurance are satisfactory, but equality of opportunity is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

| Leadership and management | 3 |
|---------------------------|---|
| Contributory grades: | |
| Equality of opportunity | 4 |
| Quality assurance | 3 |

| Hairdressing & beauty therapy | 2 |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Contributory grades: | |
| Work-based learning for young people | 2 |

KEY STRENGTHS

- good retention and achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices
- good standard of practical work
- effective links between on- and off-the job practical training
- good integration of key skills with vocational training
- well-equipped modern salons
- effective monitoring of salons
- good internal verification system
- good access and facilities for those with disabilities
- effective mentoring system
- good internal and external communications
- effective staff appraisal

KEY WEAKNESSES

- lack of co-ordination between background knowledge and practical assessment
- insufficient awareness of equal opportunities
- ineffective equal opportunities policy
- no staff training in equal opportunities
- no strategy for quality assurance
- inadequate individual learning plans
- poor target-setting during progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more resources for training in background knowledge
- better feedback from observation of teaching
- clearer identification of timescales on the development plan
- better referencing in NVQ portfolios

THE INSPECTION

1. Five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at Francesco Group Holdings Limited (the Francesco Group) in August 2002. They met 52 learners and carried out 27 interviews with staff involved in the modern apprenticeships. Inspectors visited 22 employers and interviewed 20 workplace supervisors. A range of documents was examined including 35 portfolios of evidence, 43 individual learning plans and learners' progress reviews. Inspectors observed and graded five learning sessions, and observed four work-based assessments and three progress reviews. They examined the paperwork for national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and key skills, the Francesco Group's plans, policies and procedures, promotional material, feedback from learners and employers, internal verification paperwork, assessors' records, attendance registers, minutes of meetings and induction materials. In addition to the most recent self-assessment report, which was produced in May 2002, inspectors studied quality assurance procedures, management information, reports from awarding bodies, and records of appraisal and staff development.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

| | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Total |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Hairdressing & beauty therapy | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Total | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. The Francesco Group is a private company which provides training in hairdressing. It also offers training for learners in salons which it does not own or franchise. Currently there are 16 such salons. The company has three directors, two of whom are involved in the day-to-day running of the training business. There are four full-time and three part-time trainers, a recruitment officer, a quality assurance co-ordinator, a training manager, two administrators and a model co-ordinator. Work-based learning is funded through contracts with Staffordshire and Shropshire Learning and Skills Councils (LSC). The Francesco Group is accredited with the Investors in People standard, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. There are 50 advanced modern apprentices and 40 foundation modern apprentices. Currently, 16 learners work in salons outside the Francesco Group and the remaining 74 work in salons which the Francesco Group owns or franchises.

3. The 1991 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 1.4 per cent in Staffordshire, 8.2 per cent in the West Midlands, and less than 1 per cent in Shropshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally. In May 2002, the unemployment rates were 2.5 per cent in Staffordshire, 3.5 per cent in the West Midlands, 1.8 per cent in Shropshire, 2.9 per cent in Derbyshire and 1.9 per cent in Cheshire, compared with 3 per cent nationally. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 48 per cent in Staffordshire, 43 per cent in the West Midlands, 54 per cent in Shropshire, 52 per cent in Derbyshire and 56 per cent in Cheshire, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Retention and achievement rates for the foundation modern apprentices and learners on level 2 NVQs are good and have improved consistently since 1997-98. For the advanced modern apprentices, retention and achievement rates have declined since 1997-98. However, in the year 2001-02, 11 per cent of learners have completed the advanced modern apprenticeship framework and 84 per cent are still in learning.

5. All learning sessions observed were satisfactory or better. Learners benefit from working in well-equipped modern salons, both in the workplace and at the Francesco Group Academy when they attend for off-the-job training. Learners work to a good standard, they work confidently and demonstrate good customer-care skills. There are effective links between on- and off-the-job practical training, although there is insufficient co-ordination between the practical work and background knowledge. Key skills are an integral part of the training programmes. Individual learning plans are not effective in recording and planning each individual's learning experience. Although progress reviews are regular and the process is supportive, the target-setting is poor. There are insufficient resources for background knowledge training. Learners' NVQ portfolios are not well referenced.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

6. The training division of the Francesco Group is managed by an executive director, who is responsible for the management of training. Three managers report to the executive director and they are responsible for recruitment and co-ordination, quality assurance and training. There is a team of seven trainers and a model co-ordinator, with two staff who give administrative and clerical support. The company's equal opportunities policy was updated in 2000. There are some quality assurance procedures, but no overall strategy. The Francesco Group produced its first self-assessment report in 1999, with subsequent reports in February 2001 and May 2002.

STRENGTHS

- effective staff appraisal
- good internal and external communications
- supportive mentoring system
- good access and facilities in the training centre for those with disabilities
- good internal verification system
- effective monitoring of salons

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient awareness and reinforcement of equal opportunities
- ineffective equal opportunities policy
- no staff training in equal opportunities
- no strategy for quality assurance
- inadequate audit system for quality assurance

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer timescales in the development plan
- better use of observation of teaching

7. The Francesco Group has a comprehensive annual staff appraisal system. It identifies clear and relevant personal action plans, which relate to the organisation's development plan. The self-assessment report identified this strength. Some of the points in the action plans do not have a target date. However, learners' progress against their action plan is monitored during regular review sessions with their line manager. All staff have a personal development plan and there is a wide range of training opportunities available when needs are identified. Evaluation of staff development is informal and there is no central record of staff qualifications. The staff understand clearly their individual roles and responsibilities.

8. Internal communications are good and this was identified in the self-assessment report. Members of staff have a clear understanding of activities across the organisation. They are fully involved in planning and in new developments. There are frequent team meetings and the open and consultative management style encourages informal communication and suggestions for improvement. For example, there was substantial staff involvement in planning the recent refurbishment of the Francesco Group Academy. All members of staff are encouraged to contribute to the process for management of resources, which is satisfactory. Management information systems give useful information on learner retention and achievement rates. Staff recognise the significance of these data which are used in developing improvement plans. The staff are fully consulted about the self-assessment report and the development plan. The latter does not always identify specific target dates. Communication with workplace providers is good, through formal and informal means. A quarterly newsletter is distributed to learners, workplace providers and staff, and includes celebrations of achievements and information on changes in legislation. Employers value the regular communication with the company and the prompt response when they have queries or problems.

9. The Francesco Group works in partnership with three colleges of further education, giving advice and offering training for full-time students. The group is also working in partnership with a university and is the industry partner for a degree in hairdressing science, which has recently been validated. Communication with partners is good and these partnerships offer additional opportunities for learners.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

10. The Francesco Group has an equal opportunities policy, which includes a complaints procedure and information on NVQ appeals. However, there is no reference to bullying or harassment. Learners are given a version of the equal opportunities policy at induction and information on the guidance and counselling available through the company's mentoring system. The Francesco Group attends schools' career days and career conventions to promote its training programmes. One of the learners was asked to attend an event to encourage men to apply. The company has also produced a promotional video which includes a clear equal opportunities message.

11. There is a good mentoring system in all of the salons. The mentor's role is to offer assistance with the vocational training and pastoral care to the learners throughout their modern apprenticeship. Mentors have a detailed job description and some of the salons have two mentors. Learners value the support of their mentor.

12. A further initiative to motivate learners is the company's 'star rating system'. Learners of all abilities can gain stars through practical activities which are linked to commercial sales techniques and to the NVQ standards. Learners can achieve up to five stars and have badges to identify their star rating. The system is explained on posters in each salon and gives learners the opportunity of promotion and recognition in the organisation.

13. The training centre has recently been refurbished and the new design allows access for those with a disability, including wheelchair users. Doors have been widened and a suitable toilet has been installed. Washbasins in the training salon can now tilt forwards or backwards. Most of the group's salons are on the ground-floor level, allowing easy access.

14. Learners have little knowledge of equal opportunities and recall little of the information given at induction. They know who to consult if they have a problem. The reviews of learners' progress do not make any reference to, or prompt discussion of, equal opportunities. Staff have a very limited understanding of equal opportunities and its relevance to the learners. There has been no staff training in equal opportunities.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

15. There is no written strategy for quality assurance. There are quality assurance procedures, but they have insufficient detail. The company undertakes a continuous process of self-assessment and the development plan draws upon this self-assessment to remedy weaknesses it has revealed. Staff understand the purpose and value of self-assessment.

16. The company has a good internal verification system and the three internal verifiers work as an effective team. The system is thorough, well planned, well recorded and is easy to follow. Over a period of time, the organisation has significantly increased the number of work-based assessors and the amount of work-based assessment. More employers are now involved in the assessment and it is much more readily available to learners. The internal verifiers have developed a new system for the quality assurance of workplace assessment. They observe teaching and record their findings. However, the feedback to trainers is not sufficiently detailed and does not identify staff development needs.

17. The Francesco Group carries out a spot check each year on all of its salons. The check covers health and safety, housekeeping arrangements, insurance and the salon environment. An action plan is drawn up after each visit, showing agreed target dates for improvements.

18. The company undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of its modern apprenticeship programmes, using questionnaires to employers and learners. Topics include the quality of training in the workplace, the star rating scheme, off-the-job training at the academy and induction. The response rate is good and the results are used to make improvements to the training programmes. For example, the mentoring system was introduced when it became clear that many learners found the transition from school to work difficult, and were leaving the programme early. The retention rates have now improved.

Good Practice

A qualified Afro-Caribbean hairstylist has been employed to introduce the skills of Afro-Caribbean hairdressing to the modern apprentices.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 2

| Programmes inspected | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Work-based learning for young people | 90 | 2 |

19. The Francesco Group offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in hairdressing, leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3, and a key skills qualification. The salons recruit learners directly or through referral from the Francesco Group Academy. Most of the learners join the training programmes in July and August, but the learners who are recruited at other times of the year gain experience in salons before their training programme begins. The advanced and foundation modern apprenticeship programmes are planned to take three and two years respectively. There are 50 advanced modern apprentices and 40 foundation modern apprentices. All learners are employed at the 24 salons belonging to the Francesco Group or the 16 independent salons which use the Francesco Group for training. The salons are in Staffordshire, West Midlands, Derbyshire, Shropshire and Cheshire.

20. Learners have two induction programmes, one at the Francesco Group Academy and one in their workplace salon. Groups of learners have a two-day induction to off-the-job training, which includes information on the modern apprenticeship, salon health and safety, sex education and first aid, with some hairdressing skills and product knowledge. All learners complete basic literacy, numeracy and key skills assessments at the start of their training programme. Learners who miss the group induction and assessments are dealt with individually. The Francesco Group Academy is open for five days a week and learners attend for two consecutive days each month. Each day is divided equally between background knowledge training and practical work. In addition, all learners attend salon training sessions which are arranged by their senior stylists. The learners' assessor arranges and carries out assessment in the workplace. Each learner is also allocated a salon mentor, who is a more senior staff member. The academy's staff have appropriate assessment and verification qualifications and 98 per cent of salons have qualified work-based assessors. One of the academy's trainers is a qualified key skills practitioner and one has basic skills qualifications. Three of the academy's trainers have teaching qualifications.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

| Work-based learning for young people | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|------------------|---|----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|
| Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | 1999-2000 | | 1998-99 | | 1997-98 | | 1996-97 | | 1995-96 | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | | | 38 | | 12 | | 56 | | 49 | | 32 | | 50 | | 30 | |
| Retained* | | | 4 | | 3 | | 16 | | 23 | 47 | 18 | 56 | 18 | 36 | 19 | 63 |
| Successfully completed | | | 4 | | 3 | | 16 | | 23 | 47 | 18 | 56 | 18 | 36 | 19 | 63 |
| Still in learning | | | 32 | | 1 | | 17 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

| Work-based learning for young people | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|------------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|
| Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | 1999-2000 | | 1998-99 | | 1997-98 | | 1996-97 | | 1995-96 | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | | | 40 | | 40 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained* | | | 2 | | 33 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successfully completed | | | 2 | | 27 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Still in learning | | | 34 | | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | |

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

| Work-based learning for young people | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|------------------|---|----------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|---|----------------|---|
| NVQ Training | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2002-03 | | 2001-02 | | 2000-01 | | 1999-2000 | | 1998-99 | | 1997-98 | | 1996-97 | | 1995-96 | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts | | | | | | | | | 12 | | 16 | | | | | |
| Retained* | | | | | | | | | 9 | 75 | 9 | 56 | | | | |
| Successfully completed | | | | | | | | | 9 | 75 | 9 | 56 | | | | |
| Still in learning | | | | | | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | |

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good retention and achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices
- good standard of practical work
- effective links between on- and off-the-job practical training
- good integration of key skills with vocational training
- well-equipped modern salons

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate individual learning plans
- poor target-setting in progress reviews
- insufficient co-ordination between background knowledge training and practical assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more resources to support background knowledge training
- better referencing in NVQ portfolios

21. The workplace salons and those in the academy are modern and bright. They are well resourced with good professional equipment, tools and products. The senior staff demonstrate good standards of work for the learners to watch and learn from. Training and assessment take place in these good environments. There are good numbers of clients to allow the learners to practise their skills, in the workplace salons and in the academy. In addition, learners enhance their skills by attending manufacturers' product and technical skills workshops and hairdressing competitions, shows and exhibitions.

22. There are effective links between on- and off-the-job practical training. All salons have copies of the academy's NVQ schemes of work, showing the topics to be covered each month. Some salon trainers have devised their own training programmes to complement the academy scheme. Salon trainers book clients for the learners so that they can regularly practise the new skills in the workplace. Most learners have specific salon training times each week. Practical assessments take place in the academy and in workplace salons. Trainer and assessor meetings are held approximately every eight weeks for workplace and academy staff. Salons receive a quarterly newsletter informing them of changes in awarding body standards, legislation, and general news. The staff also keep salon trainers informed of extra training and support days, for learners who are progressing slowly or need individual help.

23. Learners' practical hairdressing skills are good. Learners work confidently and display good customer care. Learners are encouraged to use a wide variety of techniques and often work above the expected standard for the NVQ. Their work on clients starts early in their training programme and many learners regularly carry out tasks which require them to demonstrate their technical skills to senior stylists. They learn colouring application techniques by attending manufacturers' seminars. In the Francesco Group's salons learners attend a company finishing school for 10 weeks before beginning their work as a stylist or technician. Key skills training and assessment

are an integral part of the hairdressing training. Assessors work in pairs, which allows the key skills assessor to record communication and application of number evidence, while the NVQ assessor records hairdressing competence. The learners are given good verbal and written feedback. Good assignments have been written to ensure that all of the key skills are covered. Learners can use the two computers at the training centre and the computer facilities of the nearby college. There are key skills teaching sessions in preparation for the external exams.

24. The individual learning plans are inadequate and whole sections such as accreditation of prior learning and additional support arrangements are not completed. Most learners are given the same target dates for completion of their NVQ units and many are near the end of the training programme. Learners who have previous salon experience do not receive challenging targets. Target dates are not revised when learners achieve NVQ units quickly. The target dates for key skills units are usually for the end of the training programme, but some learners achieve key skills well before this.

25. The records of learners' progress reviews do not show targets which have detail and dates, and are of little value in prompting action. The progress reviews take place every eight to 12 weeks in the workplace salon and involve the learner, the workplace trainer and the reviewer from the Francesco Group. Before the review, learners are given a pre-review form to complete and this forms the basis of the discussion. The form is clearly laid out and the language is relevant, but some of the learners do not complete it fully. The review process includes a grading of the learners' salon performance, by the trainer and the learners. The review process does not consider the targets on the individual learning plan, nor does it cover equal opportunities or health and safety.

26. The background knowledge training and the practical assessments are not well co-ordinated. There can be six months or more between the practical and background knowledge assessments. Many learners complete practical assessments quite early in their training programmes, before they have covered the background information. In some cases, units which learners might undertake early are delayed because small parts of background knowledge assessment have not been carried out. Most of the oral and written assessments take place at the academy, and the groups of learners progress through the scheme of work. The assessment log books and portfolios are kept at the academy and the workplace assessors use the salon's assessment records to update the portfolios at least every 12 weeks. If the salon's and academy's assessment records do not match, there can be a delay or unwarranted additional assessment.

27. In the lessons for background knowledge, the trainers from the Francesco Group give learners handouts, and learners copy from projected or dictated notes. There are very few textbooks and learners are not given or encouraged to use a textbook. There are no packs to support independent learning. There are booklets on cutting techniques, but they are not cross-referenced to the NVQ. The NVQ assessment logbooks contain very little cross-referencing, and assignments, projects, oral and supplementary evidence are difficult to locate. Assessors usually complete the NVQ portfolios and the learners do not fully understand how to use the logbooks for

reference purposes.

Good Practice

The academy has appointed a model co-ordinator to ensure that enough clients are booked for each session. Since her appointment the academy has seen a substantial increase in the number of clients and they now have a two and a half week waiting list.

Poor Practice

In the academy and workplace salons, learners and salon trainers were wearing open-toe shoes. Learners were cutting hair and standing in the cut hair, which is a health and safety hazard.