

Michael John Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50166

Name of lead inspector: Stephen Miller HMI

Last day of inspection: 29 March 2012

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 42–46 Renshaw Street
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Information about the provider

1. Established in 1978 Michael John Heath, is better known as Michael John Academy (MJA), a privately owned specialist hairdressing and beauty therapy training provider based in Liverpool. MJA operates across four training sites, a training academy in Liverpool, two delivery sites within an employer's premises in both Southport and Preston and an in-house school training environment established in partnership with Broadgreen High School, Liverpool. In January 2012 MJA relocated its main head office to a custom-built hair and beauty academy in Liverpool.
2. MJA employs 31 staff, working with around 178 employers spread across the Merseyside area. MJA provides intermediate and advanced apprenticeships funded by the Skills Funding Agency, in addition to foundation learning funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and 14-16 provision in partnership with, and funded directly by, local schools. A total of 98 intermediate apprentices and 90 advanced apprentices follow hairdressing and beauty therapy programmes on employer responsive provision. This was the focus of the inspection.
3. Liverpool is ranked as the most deprived local authority area in England and the most deprived local authority for the level of concentrated deprivation. Achievement of a level 2 qualification by the age of 19 is 71.8%, 4.1% lower than the national figure. Achievement of a level 3 qualification by the age of 19 is 39.7% which is 9.7% lower than the national figure. Around 4% of the population in Merseyside are from minority ethnic groups. Approximately 30% of the provider's learners require additional learning or social support and 67% come from disadvantaged areas.
4. Michael John Academy provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Broadgreen High school Liverpool
 - St Hilda's High school Liverpool
 - University Academy Birkenhead
 - Broughton Hall High school Liverpool
 - Childwall Community Comprehensive Liverpool
 - Alsop High Walton Liverpool
 - Aigburth High school Liverpool
 - Holly Lodge Girls school Liverpool
 - Uplands Liverpool
 - Impact Sefton
 - South Wirral school
 - Enterprise South Liverpool Academy

- Hillside High school Sefton
- Notre Dame High school Liverpool
- Archbishop Beck High school Liverpool

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: 14-16 Foundation learning	69 part-time learners 50 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	31 part-time learners
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	188 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	Grade
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2

Overall effectiveness

5. Learners' at MJA enjoy their training and the majority make very good progress. Most learners successfully complete their qualification before their planned end date. Success rates on intermediate apprenticeships are good and above the national rate. Success rates on advanced apprenticeships are just below the national rate. Foundation learning course learners and those on the schools' programme make good progress with high progression rates to more advanced programmes. Learners gain confidence and develop good hairdressing and beauty skills that are higher than those required by the qualification. Many learners, through additional courses, develop commercial skills that improve their employability. MJA effectively monitors the progress made by different groups of learners.
6. The majority of teaching and learning sessions are good. Session planning is very effective and contains a variety of activities to engage and motivate learners. Tutors use information learning technology well in most sessions to support learning, but in a small minority of weaker sessions tutors rely too much on this resource. Assessment practice is good. The provider plans additional courses well.
7. The broad range of courses provides good opportunities for learners to progress from foundation learning to advanced apprenticeships. MJA makes

very effective use of its outstanding links within the local community, provider networks and employers to support learners and develop the provision. Links with specialist external agencies help provide support for learners with complex personal needs. Support for learners is excellent and assessment of learners' wider learning needs is particularly effective.

8. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the company's key priorities and manage the provision well. Effective and comprehensive systems are in place to ensure quality and identify areas for improvement. MJA has developed a new improved system for the observation of teaching and learning but it is not yet operational across all areas of the provision. Good use is made of learner and employer views to develop the provision. MJA very effectively manages its resources to secure value for money.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good overall. The success rates on intermediate apprenticeships are good. Learners' success rates on advanced apprenticeship are satisfactory and just below the national rate. Learners make very good progress with most completing their programme early. Progression rates from foundation learning are high.
- Learners acquire and develop good practical skills. Most learners work at a higher level than that required by the qualification. In both hairdressing and beauty therapy, learners demonstrate good customer care skills and are professional and confident when working with clients. Learners quickly develop commercial skills that are valued by their employers.
- The majority of teaching and learning sessions are good. Tutors motivate learners well through a range of activities to be creative and confident in their practical skills. Most sessions are well planned, engage, and motivate learners. Tutors use information learning technology well in most sessions to support learning. Learner progress reviews are comprehensive and consistent across the provision but targets set by assessors are not sufficiently specific.
- Learners benefit from a good range of courses, which meet their needs very effectively. Programmes for 14-16 year old learners, and for those following the foundation programme, offer excellent progression routes. Additional courses in both hairdressing and beauty provide learners with good opportunities to develop their commercial skills and improve their employability. Short courses are successful in improving the quality of on-the-job training for learners.
- Partnership links to benefit learners are outstanding. Local partnerships are very effective at providing a variety of opportunities to improve and expand the provision. Links with other providers are excellent and used well to share training, good practice and develop the provision. Collaborative work with schools is very good and has been highly effective in developing courses for 14-16 learners. Very good links with employers successfully contribute to and inform the planning of programmes.

- MJA provides excellent care, guidance, and support for learners. A highly effective three-week initial assessment provides an individual support plan for learners. Pastoral support for learners is excellent. Information, advice, and guidance are good. Learners are well supported in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Intensive support strategies are in place to support learners at risk of leaving programmes early.
- MJA has a clear strategic direction, reflecting both local and national priorities. A very detailed communication plan ensures that all aspects of the provision are monitored and information provided on performance is communicated to appropriate staff. Targets are set for staff with a strong focus on improving success rates.
- Detailed analysis of management information provides very effective information on learner progress and has supported the introduction of very effective strategies to reduce the number of learners who leave early.
- MJA has a detailed single equality scheme in place, which is central to the company's ethos of inclusive provision. The provider has been particularly successful in attracting learners from disadvantaged areas. Staff are skilled at helping learners overcome barriers to learning. MJA well supports learners with complex barriers to learning. The provider uses data very effectively to compare the achievement of different groups of learners. The approach to challenging stereotypes is particularly strong.
- MJA makes good use of learner and employer feedback to promote improvement. A very active learner forum provides staff with useful feedback. Learners' representatives, selected from each course, receive training for the role they undertake. Learners and employers have a clear role in informing decision making and improvements within the organisation.
- Effective and comprehensive systems are in place to quality assure and self-assess the provision. Data are used well to assess performance and identify areas for improvement. The self-assessment report is evaluative and identifies most strengths and areas for improvement. Systems to monitor and evaluate performance are comprehensive. A new, improved system for the observation of teaching and learning has been introduced. However, it is not yet operational in all areas of the provision.
- The management and use of resources is good. MJA has made significant investments in high quality equipment and accommodation to raise aspirations and provide an excellent training environment where learners make good progress and increase their employability through good development of commercial skills.

What does Michael John Academy need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates in advanced programmes through the more effective use of outcomes from the monitoring and evaluation of current development strategies.

- Ensure that strategies to develop and improve the amount of outstanding teaching are implemented to ensure that all learners receive stimulating and inspiring teaching.
- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning by fully implementing the new quality system across all the provision and ensuring it is fully understood by staff.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the support from staff
- the opportunity to work in a modern environment
- the practical training sessions
- the welcoming and friendly staff
- feeling proud to be training with MJA
- the small class sizes allowing individual support.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more work-based assessment for beauty therapy
- the opportunity to work with more clients at the academy.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the way staff support and understand business needs
- the standard of training learners' receive
- the additional courses that are available
- the excellent communication with MJA staff
- the modern and up-to-date new academy that is of a high commercial standard.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more continuity of tutors.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

9. Overall success rates for intermediate apprentices since the previous inspection indicate an improving trend. Success rates for advanced apprenticeships over the same period have declined and have been below the national rate for the previous two years. Provider data indicate that strategies to reduce the number of early leavers are proving successful with most current learners making very good progress. Very effective systems have been introduced to identify learners who fall behind with their assessments and effective support systems are in place to help learners complete their qualification. However, improvement in success rates for advanced apprentices remains too slow. The number of learners who achieve early or within their planned end date has significantly improved. The number of foundation learners and 14-16 learners who progress to apprenticeship programmes remains consistently high.
10. The company has carried out an organisational restructure to improve accountability and now places a greater focus on quality improvement. Improvements to quality assurance processes have been made; observations of teaching and learning have been improved and include a robust internal moderation system. Management information is used effectively for performance management and business planning. Significant improvements have been made to accommodation.
11. MJA's self-assessment is good. It is inclusive and well understood by staff. The report is concise, broadly accurate and provides sufficient evidence to support key judgements. Quality improvement systems are comprehensive; action plans are clearly written, achievable and used effectively to improve the provision. The collection and use of users' views for business planning are good.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Learners enjoy their training and make very good progress. A high number of learners successfully complete their qualification before their planned end date. Around half of current learners are making exceptional progress. Almost all learners are on target to achieve their qualification early. Overall success rates for intermediate learners are good and above the national rate. Success rates on advanced programmes were lower than the national rate in the period 2009/10 and 2010/11. Progression rates from foundation learning and school programmes are high.
13. Learners develop good hairdressing and beauty skills to a higher level than is required by the qualification. The standard of customer care is good and learners are confident and professional with their clients. Learners develop additional commercial skills to enhance their employability skills through a range of extra courses. The standard of learners' portfolio work is good.

14. MJA effectively monitors the performance of different groups of learners on a monthly basis. There are no significant differences in the achievement of learners from different backgrounds. Learners who receive additional learning support achieve well.
15. Learners feel safe and systems to ensure safety are enforced rigorously. Learners have a good understanding of health and safety, which they employ in their work. Learners, through a variety of courses, have good opportunities to ensure they make informed choices about their health and well-being. Learners are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the local community through a variety of charity and community events.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

16. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Sessions are mostly well planned and contain a variety of activities to engage and motivate learners. Tutors use good questioning techniques to effectively reinforce learning. In practical sessions learners are very motivated and engaged and keen to progress. Tutors encourage learners to develop additional skills to improve their employability. Tutors are good role models and use their extensive subject knowledge to make clear links between theory and commercial practice. A good range of learning resources are used in an outstanding learning environment. In the best sessions information learning technology is used effectively, but in the small minority of weaker sessions too much emphasis is placed on using this resource. Assessments are well planned and timely and most learners make very good progress.
17. Progress reviews for learners are comprehensive and consistently effective across the provision. Most employers are actively involved in identifying and supporting learners to achieve their targets. Targets for progression are set but short-term targets are insufficiently specific. Questions used to test learners' understanding of equality and diversity in reviews are insufficiently challenging.
18. Programmes meet learners' and employers' needs well. Programmes for learners aged 14-16 and those following a foundation course, provide excellent opportunities for progression to more advanced levels. Additional courses in both hairdressing and beauty such as hair extensions, retail and barbering are available for students to improve their employability. Short courses developed for employers are effective in improving the standard of training in the salon. The volume of courses for learners aged 14-19 has increased significantly and provides good opportunities for them to gain qualifications and make informed career choices. Foundation learning programmes enable learners to gain sufficient confidence and skills to progress onto apprenticeships.
19. Partnership links that benefit learners are outstanding. Good links with employers help inform the planning of programmes. Local partnerships with a variety of groups provide excellent opportunities to improve and expand the provision. Links with other providers are very effective and used well to share

training, good practice and peer reviews. Collaborative work with schools contributes very effectively to the development of courses for learners aged 14-16.

20. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. MJA uses a highly effective three-week initial assessment, to provide learners with an individual support plan addressing learning, personal and social needs, prior to commencing their programme. The assessment period includes taster sessions for both beauty therapy and hairdressing and wider enrichment activities such as healthy living. Assessments are highly individualised and carefully consider learner aptitudes, preferences and wider support needs. Specialist tutors provide excellent pastoral support in all aspects of personal and social development. Very effective links with specialist agencies within the community help support the diverse needs of learners. Learners at risk of leaving the programme are identified early and an intensive programme of additional support is provided. Numbers leaving early in the current period have reduced. Literacy and numeracy materials are skillfully linked to vocational settings and learners quickly gain confidence in their written work. Information, advice and guidance for learners is good and provided throughout their training.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

21. MJA has developed a clear strategic direction, reflecting both local and national priorities. Recent restructuring of the company has made staff roles more efficient with clearer lines of accountability. A well structured business plan focuses on improving all key aspects of the business. A very detailed communication plan ensures that all aspects of the provision are monitored and information on performance provided to staff. Targets set for staff focus on improving success rates. Detailed analysis of management information provides very effective information on learner progress and has enabled effective strategies to be introduced to reduce the number of learners leaving early.
22. Safeguarding is a key priority for the provider and arrangements to keep learners safe are good. Policies and procedures to safeguard and protect learners are clearly written and well understood by staff. Through regular training staff are clear about the referral process and the extent of their remit. Criminal records bureau (CRB) checks are in place for all staff and a register is centrally maintained. Risk assessments are in place to ensure learners are safeguarded in all aspects of their course. The pastoral support manager is the designated person and safeguarding concerns are identified early. Good links are in place with a variety of external agencies to provide additional support for learners with complex needs.
23. MJA has a detailed, single equality scheme in place which is central to the company's ethos of inclusive provision. The company prioritises work with learners from disadvantaged areas and action plans are in place to target under represented groups. Training and frequent updates very effectively raise staff awareness and understanding of equality and diversity. Staff are skilled at

helping learners overcome personal and social barriers to learning. Learners with complex barriers to learning are supported very effectively. MJA challenges gender stereotyping effectively by promoting successful males within the hairdressing and beauty industry during the schools programme and career events at boys schools. Data are used well to compare different groups of learners to ensure they achieve as well as their peers.

24. MJA's learner engagement strategy very effectively supports and promotes improvement. A highly active learner forum provides staff with very good learner feedback. Learners' representatives selected from each course receive training for the role they undertake. Learners influence and inform decision making and improvements within the organisation. Regular employer surveys are used well to plan and develop programmes and have contributed to improvements to the provision.
25. Comprehensive systems for quality assurance and self-assessment are in place. Data are used well to inform performance and identify areas for improvement. The self-assessment process is clear and fully understood by staff. Self-assessment grades are internally and externally moderated. Action plans resulting from the self-assessment are regularly reviewed. Staff have a good understanding of the links between self-assessment and quality improvement. Systems to monitor and evaluate performance are comprehensive. The new system for the observation of teaching and learning has been introduced but is not yet fully operational in all areas of the provision.
26. Very effective use of resources secures value for money and supports learners' progress and development of valuable commercial skills that increase their employability. MJA has made significant investments in high quality equipment and accommodation to raise learners' aspirations and provides an excellent training environment. Good use is made of learners' views to improve the provision. The company's sustainability strategy ensures that the use of resources is monitored to help the company put in place measures to reduce their carbon footprint.

Information about the inspection

27. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's chief executive officer, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
28. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Michael John Academy**

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	220	220
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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