



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE 1999

REINSPECTION JUNE 2000

# Michael John Training Schools

## SUMMARY

Michael John Training Schools offers good training in hairdressing, with trainees demonstrating a high standard of commercial skills. Accommodation for off-the-job training is of a high standard. However, opportunities for work-based assessment are missed. The company offers good facilities for trainees with disabilities. Accreditation of prior learning is used effectively to help to enhance trainees' progress through their programme. Managers have an open and consultative style which encourages staff participation. Statistical data are analysed, but not used to improve practice. Some employers are insufficiently involved in their trainees' programmes although the company has introduced several procedures to improve the information received by employers. Training is thoroughly evaluated. The quality assurance system is immature, and new policies and procedures have not yet been fully tested. Internal verification is comprehensive and rigorous.

**As a result of the reinspection of Michael John Training Schools, the original published report text for management of training and quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report, which have not been subject to full reinspection, have been left in their original form.**

## GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hair & beauty	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	3
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	2

## KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality accommodation for off-the-job training
- ◆ trainees demonstrate a high standard of practical skills
- ◆ good facilities for trainees with disabilities
- ◆ accreditation of prior learning enhances trainees' progress
- ◆ open, consultative management
- ◆ thorough, effective evaluation of training



### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ statistical data not systematically used to improve practice
- ◆ immature quality assurance system

## INTRODUCTION

1. Michael John Training Schools (MTS) is a privately owned company offering training in hairdressing, which was established in 1983. The work-based training is contracted through Manchester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) which, for the purpose of inspection, is the co-ordinating TEC. MTS' head office and main training school is in Manchester city centre. At the time of the first inspection, the company had two other training centres, one in Cheadle Hume and one in Stockport. These are no longer used for training, although one remains in use as a commercial salon. The company employs 14 staff, led by the managing director, who takes overall responsibility for the training programme. Of the remaining 13, 11 are directly involved in training, and two have administrative roles.

2. At the time of reinspection, there were 124 trainees working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in hairdressing at levels 2 and 3, 31 fewer than there had been when the original inspection took place. The managing director has overall responsibility for the contract and for finance. The training director is responsible for the day-to-day management of training. MTS has no subcontracting arrangements. Trainees may attend the training centre weekly, monthly or they may complete all training in the workplace. All trainees are employed in local salons.

3. Most trainees are recruited from the areas surrounding the company's training centres, these being Manchester and Stockport. Manchester has a working-age population of over 230,000. Unemployment stands at 4.6 per cent compared with the national average of 4.1 per cent. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups in Manchester is 7.3 per cent. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 39.5 per cent in Manchester, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The majority of school leavers, 61.8 per cent, remain in full-time education, with a further 9.6 per cent entering work-based training.

4. The local economy has seen a dramatic decline in manufacturing and engineering industries, while there has been a rapid growth in the service sector. Different wards within the city of Manchester show marked contrasts between some of the most affluent areas of the country and some of the poorest in Europe.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. MTS produced its first self-assessment report, with the support of Manchester TEC, in response to external inspection. The details of the report were discussed with staff. The training director was responsible for the collation and presentation of the report. The report was neither clear nor accurate. Some strengths claimed were no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with the grades proposed for the occupational area. They also agreed with the grades for equal opportunities and trainee support, but awarded lower grades for management of training and quality assurance.

6. Three inspectors spent a total of nine days at MTS during June 1999. They met trainees, company staff and employers and spoke with representatives from the local TEC. They visited 13 per cent of the company's workplace providers, interviewed 14 per cent of employers, interviewed 24 per cent of trainees, and held 15 interviews with the company's staff. They also observed assessments and reviews.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Hair & beauty		3	1			4
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

7. After the first inspection, managers from MTS consulted trainees, employers and members of the company's staff to produce an action plan, and to revise the self-assessment report. The company formed close partnerships with other providers to share good practice. Key staff attended seminars in action planning run by Manchester TEC.

8. For the reinspection in June 2000, two inspectors spent a total of four days at the company's premises. They visited four workplaces and interviewed eight trainees, four work-based supervisors and five members of MTS's staff. They observed one training session, which was not graded as it was given by a visiting lecturer. They examined a range of documents, including policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, employer contracts and internal and external verification records.

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Hair & beauty (hairdressing)

### Grade 2

9. MTS has 155 people in training. All trainees are employed in local salons. Thirty-six per cent are modern apprentices working towards NVQ level 3. Sixty-four per cent are national trainees or are on other work-based training programmes working towards NVQ level 2. Trainees have the option of completing all their training within the workplace or also attending the training centre. Attendance is weekly for level 2 trainees and monthly for level 3 trainees. Trainees taking the first option are assessed in the workplace by peripatetic assessors, as currently there are no qualified assessors employed in the salons. Training at the centre includes both practical and theoretical knowledge. Trainees are reviewed in the workplace every 12 weeks. In 1997-1998, 49 per cent of trainees achieved an NVQ at level 2, and 22 per cent at level 3; in 1998-1999, 43 per cent gained an NVQ at level 2 and 20 per cent at level 3. The strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report lacked clarity. Many of the strengths identified are no more than normal practice. The one weakness related to management. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality accommodation for off-the-job training
- ◆ trainees demonstrate high standard of practical skills
- ◆ flexible training programme
- ◆ good understanding by trainees of NVQ process

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no key skills training in information technology
- ◆ unstructured on-the-job training
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Awarding body assessment documents have been adapted to ensure that full details on NVQs are included. When completed, the information is transferred to the assessment logbook, signed and dated. This is a good method of recording trainees' development and final assessments.*

10. Trainers are well motivated and enthusiastic and have good working relationships with trainees. Staffing levels are adequate for the number of trainees. Some trainers have only recently joined the team and are still becoming familiar with the role, and some have yet to acquire the relevant assessor qualifications. The good off-the-job training is reflected in the level of skills development demonstrated by trainees. Trainees confidently perform salon tasks, and work to a good professional standard. Practical sessions keep trainees busy, with sufficient clients booked to ensure that

they can undertake their next task for assessment. Trainees demonstrate a high level of practical skills for their length of time on the programme. They are well motivated and are enthusiastic about the range of tasks they are undertaking. Some trainees nearing the completion of the first year of training are encouraged by employers to begin treating clients in the salon.

11. There are no qualified assessors in the workplace. Trainees are assessed when they attend the training centre, or for those completing all their training in the workplace, when they are visited by peripatetic assessors. In both the workplace and the centre, the aim is to maximise assessment opportunities during any one visit. However, work completed throughout the week in the salon cannot be accredited towards competence. This means that trainees are unable to collect evidence of their skills from naturally occurring situations. Assessors consider observation of performance to be the best form of evidence and use of witness testimonies, photographs and diaries, to a much lesser degree, to support the assessment procedures.

12. MTS' main training centre is spacious, light and some areas are equipped with air conditioning. It contains salons as well as demonstration and theory rooms. The three salons are of a high quality. One is used to teach colouring techniques and is designed to afford the maximum natural daylight. The training areas are open-plan which makes good use of space to allow for maximum numbers of clients, and any possible increase in trainee numbers. The centre's decor is fresh and walls are decorated with large photographs of professional hairstyles. However, there are no examples of trainees' work on display as a means of promoting good quality projects and assignments. Equipment is up to date and in good order, and hand tools are provided for trainees' use during their training. The company recruits a wide range of models to help trainees to gain a variety of skills.

13. Many workplace salons provide training for their employees, but are unable to structure the training to co-ordinate with theory training. There is a basic agenda of work to be covered in the first 20 weeks of the programme, but this is not shared with employers. Therefore, training delivered in the workplace cannot be linked to the training undertaken at the training centre. This prevents employers planning, in any detail, work to reinforce the trainees' off-the-job training. Some employers have knowledge of the training programme because they ask their trainees, but many are ill informed. This means that the training and support offered varies greatly between salons. Employers feel they could benefit from a training programme illustrating what is to be delivered at the centre over a period of time.

14. Trainees understand the NVQ process, the assessment requirements and evidence recording. Portfolios are well collated and presented. Off-the-job assessments are well planned. Trainees' attendance at the centre begins with a registration session. Here, tasks are allocated to individual trainees based upon their assessment requirements. This is carefully monitored by an effective internal verification system.

15. When a trainee starts training, the company endeavours to match trainees' and employers' requirements with an appropriate training pattern. For example, NVQ

level 2 trainees attend the centre all day each Monday, but if there is a particular need, additional on-the-job training is made available. Level 3 trainees have requested a minimum of once-a-month attendance at the training centre. This has been agreed and actioned. Some trainees choose not to attend the training centre, preferring to undertake all their training within the salon. For these trainees, a trainer visits them regularly in the salon to undertake their training and assessment. This trainer negotiates with the employer an appropriate time and place for the on-the-job training. This is a popular training route, with 30 to 35 per cent of trainees choosing this way to their target qualification. The company allows the visiting trainers a high degree of autonomy and trainees receive individualised training support. The company has placements throughout the geographical area in which it recruits as well as two satellite training centres. This means that trainees have a good choice of place of work and can save on travelling time.

16. The company has satisfactorily delivered key skills to modern apprenticeship standards. However, to date the key skills have not been completed within the same time span as the NVQs, and some have been achieved some time later. The company began delivering national traineeships in 1998. This stimulated a review of the documents and projects related to key skills. Newly devised projects are designed to help trainees to identify which key skills they cover in their occupational work. Trainees are completing application of number through project-based work. They are able to explain their level 2 communication tasks. However, they have yet to begin work to acquire them. The required information technology key skill is not currently part of the programme. There is an initial assessment of trainees' computing competence with the intention of producing programmes for individual trainees. It is too soon to evaluate the effectiveness of the recent changes and developments.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

17. MTS has an equal opportunities policy which meets the contractual requirements of the TEC. It promotes the company's willingness to receive applications from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities. Hairdressing is traditionally a female-dominated occupation and this is reflected in the company's trainees, with men accounting for only 1 per cent of trainees, compared with 58 per cent in the local population. The representation from minority ethnic groups in the local community is 12.6 per cent. The proportion of trainees from minority ethnic groups is 1.5 per cent. There is a named manager responsible for equal opportunities. New documents are currently being used to monitor the ethnicity and gender profile of trainees recruited. The company identified three strengths and one weakness during self-assessment. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths and found one other. The weakness related to the occupational area. Inspectors identified two additional weaknesses. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.



### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ marketing aimed at under-represented groups
- ◆ good facilities provided for trainees with physical disabilities
- ◆ company staff profile effectively represents local population

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of understanding of equal opportunities by trainees
- ◆ poor understanding of discrimination, harassment and disability policies and practices

18. One of the company's objectives from its management meetings in 1994 was to increase representation by men and minority ethnic groups within three years. The proportion of minority ethnic trainees has increased from 0 per cent to 1.5 per cent. The company is attempting to redressing the gender imbalance. Various methods are used to improve recruitment in these areas, and new ideas are acted upon. Visits are made to schools and careers evenings and boys' schools are specifically targeted. Newspapers circulated to the large minority ethnic population of the area are used to place advertisements offering training opportunities. The company participates in a large careers event, which is also attended by other employers and training organisations in the area. This activity has enabled the company to successfully recruit a high number of under-represented trainees including men and those from minority ethnic groups.

19. Trainees' understanding of equal opportunities, even at the most basic level, is poor. Although they receive information on the companies' equality of opportunity policy at induction, there are no systems or training sessions to reiterate their learning and their understanding is not checked. They have no knowledge of its implications, in relation to their rights and responsibilities. There is no system to monitor employers' knowledge and understanding of the equal opportunities policy.

20. The company's main training school has been equipped to accommodate trainees with physical disabilities. Trainees can access the ground floor and complete all their NVQ work in this area of the building. Facilities for those with disabilities include an adapted lavatory, no steps either into or inside the building, large open-plan spaces to assist with maneuvering and a designated work area at the front of the building to enable easy access.

21. Forty per cent of the company's employees are men and sixty per cent are women. This high proportion of male staff helps to encourage male trainees into what is historically a female-dominated occupation. The company's staff profile shows a 10 per cent representation of those from a minority ethnic background, compared with 7.2 per cent in the local working population. MTS recognises relevant religious festivals and allows employees time to attend these celebrations.

22. The company's quality assurance policy does not incorporate discrimination or harassment and there is no disability statement. Trainees are not informed at either induction or during the training programme of any of the above procedures. Employers do not have copies of the equal opportunities policy and so have no understanding of the procedures or the implications of not conforming with the policy.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

23. All trainees receive an induction at the training centre and in the workplace. Trainees' satisfaction with the induction programme is evaluated using a questionnaire. Reviews take place regularly. Trainee's progress is monitored at the reviews. Company trainers visit salons to assess trainees who are unable to attend one of the training centres. The strengths identified in the self-assessment report represent no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with the weakness identified and found additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ regular reviews keep trainees informed of their progress
- ◆ effective personal counselling and advice
- ◆ accreditation of prior learning used to enhance trainees' progress

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor initial assessment
- ◆ trainees unaware of their rights and responsibilities and of grievance and complaints procedures
- ◆ support for trainees not recorded

24. Trainees' progress is formally reviewed every three months. They are clear about the process and receive a record of the outcome of the review. However, employers do not automatically receive a copy of the review. Therefore, some employers are ill informed about trainees' progress or the level of support required. Trainers frequently encourage trainees to discuss their progress and negotiate revised targets. Personal counselling and advice is carried out within a supportive environment. Trainers make amendments to instructional materials to ensure that trainees can understand them. One visiting trainer supports the trainees who do all their training and assessment in the workplace.

25. Training is adjusted if a trainee can demonstrate prior hairdressing experience or already holds a nationally recognised qualification, so that trainees do not repeat prior experience. When deciding whether accreditation of prior learning is applicable, the company investigates the level of competence claimed and the

authenticity and currency of the evidence. For instance, a level 3 trainee with prior experience is able to accelerate through some assessments and shorten the period of training. One trainee is in the process of gaining recognition for the information technology key skills component of a foundation general NVQ (GNVQ).

26. The company makes a particular effort to celebrate trainees' achievements. They make a number of awards to reward achievements through the year as well as at the end of the programme. This allows them to recognise all levels of trainees' commitment, ability and achievement. The local TEC and a major international hairdressing manufacturer support the celebrations. Trainees enjoy the event, which is also a good aid to encouraging motivation.

27. Prior to commencing training, all trainees undertake an initial assessment. The assessment covers simple reading, writing and arithmetic. Trainees do not always understand the results of these tests. The information is not recorded, nor is it systematically used to plan additional learning support or inform individual training plans. This means that the company is unable to accurately assess the appropriateness of the support it provides. The assessments used have been devised at the training centre, therefore, the outcomes cannot be measured against nationally recognised tests. New procedures have been established for trainees with severe learning difficulties. This now requires such trainees to be referred to an adviser at the local TEC. This procedure is too recent for its effectiveness to be evaluated.

28. At the time of induction, trainees receive details of the training programme and company policies. A comprehensive induction checklist is used. For example, the pack includes details on health and safety, equal opportunities and contractual information. However, trainees are not fully aware of the implications of the policies, nor of their rights and responsibilities. They have no understanding of grievance and complaints procedures. They do not know who to contact in the event that they have a grievance, what they should do or how to process a complaint.

## **Management of training**

## **Grade 2**

29. The managing director of MTS has overall responsibility for the training programme, which includes such areas as monitoring finance and quality. The running and development of the training programme is the responsibility of the training director, training manager and course director. The training manager leads the team of two peripatetic assessors. All other personnel report directly to the training director. The course director is responsible for managing the TEC's administrative documents and has recently taken on responsibility for the management of quality assurance. Since the first inspection, two assessors have left the company. An assessor has been promoted to the post of internal verifier. A self-employed consultant assists the course director in the development of new quality assurance procedures. Staff are appraised annually and appraisal is linked to a staff development programme. Issues related to assessment and training are

discussed at regular staff meetings. There are twice-yearly meetings to discuss the business plan. MTS is an Investor in People.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ insufficient involvement by employers
- ◆ statistical data not used to inform management decisions
- ◆ data not systematically analysed
- ◆ procedures do not reflect good practice in management of equal opportunity

30. Two of these weaknesses were found to have been satisfactorily addressed by the company at the time of reinspection. The weaknesses relating to employers' involvement and use of statistical data have been partially addressed but remain problematic.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ business plan used to improve performance
- ◆ comprehensive strategies to improve links with employers
- ◆ open, consultative management

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient involvement from some employers
- ◆ statistical data not systematically used to improve practice

31. The company holds a twice-yearly business review meeting which is attended by all staff. The agenda includes a review of the previous six months' activities, recruitment and numbers of trainees and minutes from other meetings. The outcomes of the meeting are used to set targets related to the TEC contract for the next six months. A business plan is produced which includes objectives, methods of achievement and personnel responsible for action. This is regularly updated to reflect progress. The plans also include clearly defined management targets related to the contract and trainee support, which are up to date at all times. Other targets are set which relate to particular job roles. For example, a goal set for all assessors during 2000-01 is to persuade a given number of salon managers to begin training as work-based assessors. Staff have a clear understanding of the company's business plan and their part in it. They demonstrate a shared commitment to the company's business objectives.

32. The original inspection team found that the management of equal opportunities was unsatisfactory. Managers did not have a monitoring mechanism during the trainees' review visits as required by their TEC contract. There was no management procedure to effectively measure the levels of equality of opportunity in the workplace and no data were collected to gain an overview of employer

practices and procedures. Trainees' understanding of equal opportunities was vague. Since then, the training director has taken responsibility for equal opportunities, and has introduced a number of improvements. Equality of opportunity in the workplace is thoroughly monitored during trainees' progress reviews, which now occur every eight weeks. Employers are all issued with an information pack which includes information about equal opportunities. They are required to display a copy of MTS' equal opportunities policy. MTS recently undertook a survey of gender, ethnicity and disability in the workplace. The results have been passed on to employers. Trainees and employers now have a clear and detailed understanding of the company's appeals, grievance and equal opportunities policies. Trainees' understanding of these policies is monitored through the internal verification procedure. When an assessment is observed, the internal verifier asks the candidate to state what they would do in the event of a grievance or an appeal.

33. The first inspection team found that employers received advice and information from the company when they requested it, and that their questions were dealt with effectively by appropriate staff. However, employers were not regularly updated on the company's policies, or on revisions to procedures and new documents. Over the past year, MTS has implemented a range of initiatives to improve its links with employers. A new employers' pack explains NVQs and sets out clearly trainees and employers' rights and responsibilities with regard to training programmes. Supplementary information is sent to employers regularly in the form of newsletters, mail shots and invitations to company events. MTS staff update employers with regard to health and safety and equal opportunities, and provides frequent reminders about recruitment, induction and off-the-job training. A training calendar shows clearly when off-the-job training is scheduled, and what will take place during each session. Employers' forums are held by MTS every six months. These provide employers with the opportunity to meet to discuss training and contribute to the development of training programmes. Minutes are sent to all employers, whether they have attended or not. These strategies have been successful in increasing some employers' understanding of training, but others remain insufficiently involved. Only a minority of employers, usually about six out of a possible 96, attend the employers' forums. Some are not clear about how far their trainees are through their qualifications, and they do not understand aspects of the training programme, such as key skills. They are not, therefore, sufficiently well informed to contribute fully to their trainees' programmes.

34. At the time of the first inspection, statistical data were collected in some areas of provision, such as staff induction but not others, for example trainees' achievements. Data were not analysed. A comprehensive range of statistical data is now gathered and analysed, including information regarding trainees' achievement, retention and destinations. However, this is not yet used to improve practice, or to inform management decision-making. It is too early to say how effective the collection of these statistical data will be in improving the company's performance.

35. Managers at MTS have an open and approachable style which encourages staff

participation. There is a good balance of formal, minuted staff meetings, which are held once a month, and informal meetings, which take place once a week, and after every off-the-job training session. Staff feel consulted and informed. They consider that their ideas are valued, and have no hesitation in suggesting initiatives. There is an annual appraisal system, supplemented by more frequent, informal meetings between staff and company managers to discuss progress and professional development needs. The results of appraisal are linked to an annual staff development plan. The company also agrees a yearly budget for staff training.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 2

36. MTS meets the quality standards of the TEC with which it contracts. The company has a quality assurance framework, overseen by the course director in conjunction with a specialist quality assurance consultant who was brought into the company in April 2000. A new quality assurance manual was introduced in August 1999. Some new policies and procedures have been introduced. All staff have been consulted regarding the development of their new policies. MTS obtains regular feedback from employers and trainees. Employers are also given the opportunity to feedback through the review process and employer forums. Feedback is analysed and used to identify where improvements are needed. At the time of the first inspection the self-assessment report did not reflect the company's current position in some areas and failed to provide some evidence to support either the strengths or weaknesses outlined. Employers and trainees were not part of the self-assessment process. The areas of provision subject to reinspection have been more clearly described and accurately represent the company's quality assurance at the time of reinspection.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ lack of document control in quality assurance policies and procedures
- ◆ quality assurance system lacks senior management control
- ◆ quality assurance procedures neither shared with nor implemented by all staff and employers
- ◆ judgements in the self-assessment report not supported by evidence

37. On reinspection, it was found that all the weaknesses identified on the first inspection have been satisfactorily addressed.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ comprehensive internal verification system
- ◆ thorough, effective evaluation of training
- ◆ effective staff involvement in the review process for quality assurance

## WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of established quality assurance system

38. The internal verification system within the training centre was cited as a strength during the first inspection, particularly the internal verifier's use of questioning to elicit trainees' views of their programmes. There is a new internal verifier who is building on the previous good practice. Internal verification is thorough, rigorous and well organised. New methods have been introduced for sampling assessors' assessment practice, and for tracking and recording internal verification decisions. Feedback to assessors is detailed and constructive. When the first inspection took place, the internal verifier had not carried out monitoring of the on-the-job assessment practice. Little assessment currently takes place at work. However, 10 work-based supervisors are now working towards their assessor awards through MTS, and they will be assessing trainees at work in the future. There are now sampling plans for the internal verification of work-based assessors. There are two assessors working for the company who have not yet achieved their assessor awards. Following guidelines agreed with their awarding body, qualified assessors randomly countersign some of the assessments carried out by these unqualified assessors.

39. During the first inspection, evaluation of training was found to be thorough. Questionnaires were used to evaluate standards, measure performance, and improve practice. Rigorous evaluation remains an integral part MTS' approach to training. Regular feedback is collected from trainees, employers and staff, regarding all aspects of the provision from recruitment through to the trainee leaving the organisation. There is an evaluation plan in place, which gives a schedule of planned evaluation activities within each specific area of the company's practice. Feedback gained through evaluation is analysed and used to influence change. At the end of the off-the-job training sessions, the internal verifier uses verbal questioning to obtain trainees' views on their experience of the assessment process. Trainees' responses are recorded and analysed and issues arising from them are presented to the staff at weekly meetings. Tutors are given feedback on their performance, even those from outside the organisation who make infrequent appearances as guest speakers. The internal verifier evaluates her own performance through feedback from the assessors.

40. Serious weaknesses were identified in the company's quality assurance system during the first inspection. Both the quality assurance manual and the office facilities contained out-of-date policies and procedures. Updated information was available in the manual alongside old practices. Quality control on the numbering and dating of paper documents lacked rigour. Quality assurance arrangements were managed by a part-time member of staff, and were not overseen by the company's senior managers. This lack of management control led to confusion among staff as to appropriate quality assurance practices and documents. Company staff, and those employers providing off-the-job training, did not understand the company's quality assurance operations.



41. These weaknesses have been satisfactorily addressed. The company's course director now has managerial oversight of quality assurance. The quality assurance framework is operated by a specialist consultant, who is employed by MTS on a part-time basis to ensure continuous development and improvement. Any changes to policy are addressed jointly by the course director and the consultant. Staff at MTS have all been involved in the process of redeveloping the quality assurance manual, policies and procedures. Individual members of staff, chosen for their expertise in a specific area, have been brought into the review and updating process to ensure that each policy or working practice is accurate and fit for purpose. Each member of the team has been trained in the working practices which relate to them within the quality assurance framework. Staff are now well aware that quality assurance is an integral part of their role. Employers have been informed about the new quality assurance system, and the importance attached to this by the company. Documents are now effectively controlled, and those which were out-of-date have been withdrawn. Documents are now indexed and numbered and there is an adequate supply. An administrator has recently been appointed to manage documents on a day-to-day basis, and ensure that they are well ordered and readily available to company staff.

42. Many of the improvements made to the quality assurance system are still very new and there has been insufficient time in which to test their effectiveness. A system for internal audit has been devised, but the introduction of this has been delayed. An audit on the health and safety policy and procedures was planned for May 2000. However, this had not taken place at the time of reinspection. As yet, therefore, the company does not have a way of ensuring that the new policies and working procedures are being followed, or of evaluating their effectiveness.

43. MTS's staff produce action plans across all areas of its provision. The company devises strategies to address the weaknesses and build on the strengths identified through internal evaluation and external audit. Objectives are set which are specific and measurable.