

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MC Hair Academy**

**12 May 2003**



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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning 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

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.

# INSPECTION REPORT

## MC Hair Academy

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The MC Hair Academy (MCHA) is a privately owned hairdressing company based in Ashford, Kent. MCHA forms the training arm of the Master Cutters salon group, and was originally known as the Master Cutters Training Centre until the current company director acquired a controlling share of the Master Cutters group in 2000. The Master Cutters group now consists of two salons, one located in Ashford town centre and the other in Tenterden, with the group's head office based on the outskirts of Ashford at the Invicta Business Centre. MCHA, which provides the group's training centre, is located at the Ashford salon. In August 2002, MCHA expanded its training and assessment provision to external salons throughout parts of Kent, taking a number of learners from a training provider no longer contracting with the Kent and Medway Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in hairdressing training. In addition, salons have either contacted MCHA to obtain training for their staff members or, in some cases, salons have been contacted by MCHA where a learner requires a work placement.

2. Off-the-job training in hairdressing is delivered at MCHA or in some cases in the workplace, with learners either attending MCHA on one day a week or receiving off-the-job training in the workplace from visiting MCHA's staff once a week. The senior management team consists of a company director and two partners, one of whom manages the Tenterden operations, the other working part time in the company's head office. The company director has responsibility for the strategic and operational management of the company and for the company's policies and procedures. There is a business manager and training manager who each have responsibility for specific areas of the company's activity. MCHA currently has seven training staff, of which three are part time. MCHA funds its training provision through Kent and Medway LSC and European Social Fund (ESF) initiatives.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### **Hairdressing & beauty therapy**

3. There are currently 28 learners on hairdressing and beauty therapy learning programmes. Of these, 13 are advanced modern apprentices, 14 are foundation modern apprentices, and one learner is working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 only. All learners are employed. The foundation modern apprenticeship programmes lasts for 25 months and advanced modern apprenticeships for 30 months. Progress reviews take place every 12 weeks. Learners can join a programme at any time during the year, and receive an induction over a period of 12 weeks, which includes an introduction to the learning programme, equal opportunities, and health and safety policies. Learners complete an initial assessment of their basic and key skills needs. MCHA uses this information to identify those who need additional support. When additional support needs are identified, support is provided by MCHA's staff on an individual basis. Assessment takes place at the academy and in the workplace.

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Recruitment of learners is carried out mainly through advertising, but also by negotiation with the Connexions agency and by direct involvement with schools. MCHA has a team of five assessors, of whom one is an internal verifier. There is also another internal verifier. In addition, there are 20 work-based assessors.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learner interviews	32
Number of staff interviews	13
Number of employer interviews	4
Number of subcontractor interviews	4
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	7

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

4. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, MCHA's leadership and management are good. The company's approach to equality of opportunity is good, and its quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. The quality of work-based learning programmes in hairdressing and beauty therapy is good.

## GRADES

*grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak*

<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	3

<b>Hairdressing &amp; beauty therapy</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

5. **The retention and achievement rates are good for advanced modern apprentices.** In 1999-2000, the retention rate was 86 per cent. In August 2002 MCHA took over the

learners of another provider whose training contract had been withdrawn. Most of these learners were making very slow progress towards their qualifications. These learners are now making good progress towards their qualifications. The retention rates for 2000-01 is 100 per cent. For 2001-02, 100 per cent of starters are still in learning.

6. The retention and achievement rates are satisfactory for foundation modern apprentices. In 1999-2000 the retention rate was 60 per cent with an achievement rate of 60 per cent. During 2000-01 there was a sharp decline in both rates following the withdrawal of two salons from MCHA. This meant that all but one of the learners were withdrawn from that year's intake. For 2001-02 the achievement rate is 11 per cent, with 55 per cent of learners still in learning.

7. **Learners are able to develop good practical hairdressing skills.** Throughout their training the learners are working in environments that give them practise at dealing with commercial salon pressures. Learners make and record appointment bookings and respond to clients in a professional manner. Learners' fully understand their portfolios of evidence that are well organised and maintained.

### Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

8. **Learners are trained in good, well-resourced salons which operate to a high commercial standard.** Learners also have access to a good range of professional products for salon use, and an equally broad range of good retail products available for sale to clients.

9. **A wide range of teaching methods is used by staff to meet learners' different learning styles.** Teaching materials are of a high standard, and are supported by home-study packs. Learning sessions were judged good to very good, and none were judged to be unsatisfactory. Each trainer produces a lesson plan which describes the learning activity and the ways of measuring learners' understanding of the topic covered. There is one trainer to every four learners, and a high level of individual learner support is provided. Learners who experience problems with their theory work are given good individual support.

10. **Induction is good** and takes place over a period of 12 weeks, during which learners are encouraged to think carefully about whether hairdressing is the right career path for them. There is a skills assessment and a range of activities to identify their preferred learning style. The induction gives detailed training on health and safety, particularly focusing on skin care and the ways to help prevent dermatitis. Equal opportunities are also covered at this time. Learners fully understand the topics covered during induction.

11. **Learners receive good support from staff.** The learners have good working

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relationships with staff. Learners' meetings take place on a monthly basis during which they discuss their training issues with the management of the company. Learners are provided with text books.

12. There are satisfactory arrangements to assess learners' literacy and numeracy skills. All learners are tested during induction to determine their individual learning needs and systems are in place to provide additional learning support. This support is given on an individual basis, but there are no records of what is covered during these support sessions.

13. **Learners are set short-term targets that, in some cases, are not related specifically to their qualification.** Some learners are unable to recall their short-term targets and are unclear about what they needed to do to meet the targets.

### Leadership and management

14. **MCHA has effectively managed changes in the company's structure and direction.** In the two years before inspection, the company had changed its ownership, doubled the scale of its training activities, enlarged the geographical spread of its operations, and entered into new partnership arrangements for training with two salons, once part of the original Master Cutters group. Despite these significant changes, staff fully understand the improvements to the company's performance and the company's mission. Good work was carried out to ensure that new and existing learners received good support, and training and assessment were not affected.

15. **The company has a good staff appraisal and development system.** All members of staff, including learners, have an appraisal every six months. The company is supportive of requests for development, and has provided training or support for training for many members of staff.

16. **There are open and effective internal communications.** There are monthly meetings of managers, assessors, learners and salon staff, and minutes are widely circulated. The company director chairs monthly learners' meetings and responds directly to enquiries and requests from learners. Salon staff maintain very close links with staff at the company's head office, and there are many levels of informal communication operating across the company. Staff and learners at locations furthest from the company's Ashford base have regular contact with other managers and staff.

17. **There is ineffective management of key and basic skills support for learners.** Learners do receive support. There are no clear systems for establishing the correct type or level of support required. There is no monitoring of the effectiveness of support, and no measures in place to re-assess learners' needs after support has been given.

18. **MCHA effectively promotes equality of opportunity, and has a detailed policy statement which is closely linked to training activities.** Publicity material and visual images displayed at MCHA present positive images of under-represented groups. Recent marketing campaigns have focused on encouraging under-represented groups,

especially men, into hairdressing. Advertising materials present a clear message that all learners will be given support to develop the skills to succeed in the profession.

19. In addition to completing a work pack, and watching and discussing a video during their induction, **learners receive very good further training that improves their understanding of equality of opportunity.**

20. **There is thorough monitoring of health and safety at the company's premises and employers' salons.** At induction, learners are given full information about hazardous chemicals used in hairdressing, and on ways to safeguard against damaging their skin. Learners fully understand the information they had been given. There are good displays of health and safety materials. Regular checks are made to ensure that partner salons maintain the required standards of health and safety for learners.

21. **Quality assurance improvement measures are not yet sufficiently established.** There is an operations manual that sets out the main quality assurance procedures and processes, including timescales, reporting mechanisms and responsibilities for such aspects as health and safety, feedback from learners, partnership codes and agreements, lesson planning and review, monitoring learners' progress, and internal verification. Staff understand the importance of quality assurance, but some are unsure about the mechanisms in place to monitor activity and bring about improvement. The company's senior manager with responsibility for quality assurance is currently conducting a review of the operations manual to link processes more closely and improve staff understanding of quality assurance.

22. **Mechanisms for collecting and analysing learners' feedback are inadequate.** The views of learners are collected at various times during their learning programme, and after learning sessions, but there is no clear timetable for sampling. Some groups of learners have been surveyed more often than others. There are variations between the frequency and ways that responses are collected from MCHA's own learners and those from other employers. Telephone interviews and most of the learners' questionnaires do not provide a sufficient level of anonymity for respondents. Minutes of assessors' meetings and management meetings show that learners' feedback is discussed and acted on where relevant.

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- effective management of change
- good staff development and appraisal
- open and effective internal communications
- effective promotion of equality of opportunity
- good understanding of equality of opportunity by learners

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- good monitoring of health and safety

### **Weaknesses**

- ineffective management of key and basic skills support
- no established quality assurance mechanisms
- inadequate learner feedback mechanisms

## **Hairdressing & beauty therapy**

### **Strengths**

- very good training environments
- good induction
- good learner support
- good retention and achievement rates on advanced modern apprenticeship

### **Weaknesses**

- poor understanding of key skills by staff and learners
- inadequate short-term targets

### **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT MC HAIR ACADEMY:**

- approachable and helpful provider staff
- regular visits from assessors and training manager
- that the training environment is similar to the place in which they work
- very thorough health and safety information
- useful induction
- being listened to by staff

### **WHAT LEARNERS THINK MC HAIR ACADEMY COULD IMPROVE:**

- MCHA feels too busy at times
- better key skills training
- better learning support

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR MC HAIR ACADEMY:**

- to develop a co-ordinated quality assurance system to cover all aspects of training
- to improve the planning and effectiveness of additional learning support activities
- to improve staff and learners' understanding of key skills
- to set appropriately challenging short-term targets for learners

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### Grade 2

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

#### Strengths

- effective management of change
- good staff development and appraisal
- open and effective internal communications
- effective promotion of equality of opportunity
- good understanding of equality of opportunity by learners
- good monitoring of health and safety

#### Weaknesses

- ineffective management of key and basic skills support
- no established quality assurance mechanisms
- inadequate learner feedback mechanisms

23. MCHA has effectively managed changes in the company's structure and direction. In the two years before inspection, the company had changed its ownership, doubled the scale of its training activities, enlarged the geographical spread of its operations, and entered into new partnership arrangements for training with two salons which were once part of the original Master Cutters group. Despite these significant changes, staff fully understand the improvements to the company's performance and the company's mission. With one exception, all company managers have been recruited from the existing staff base. Learners fully understand the progression routes available to them through the company. When the company agreed to take over learners from another provider in August 2002, it almost doubled its contracted numbers. Good work was carried out to ensure that new and existing learners received good support, and assessment and training were not affected. Many new learners who had made very slow progress with their previous provider are now making very rapid progress.

24. The company operates a good staff appraisal and development system. All members of staff, including learners, have an appraisal every six months. Each appraisal is conducted by the company director, and is recorded in staff files. Individuals complete a self-assessment before the appraisal meeting. Discussions then focus on the evaluation of past performance and the setting of targets. Appraisals successfully help staff to develop their roles within the company. The company is supportive of requests for development, and has provided training or support for training for many members of staff. A consultancy has been helped to devise a bespoke five-module staff development programme focused on personal growth, customer care and customer service. At the time of inspection, staff were progressing through the programme in small groups.

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25. There are open and effective internal communications. A wide range of groups meet to discuss aspects of training, and the notes or minutes from such meetings are often shared with other groups. The company director chairs monthly meetings for learners and responds directly to enquiries and requests from learners. Salon staff maintain very close links with administrative staff based at the company's head office, and there are many levels of informal communication operating between the salons, head office and staff. Information about learners' progression, assessment, internal verification and training activity is circulated by means of monthly salon, assessor, management, staff and learner meetings, and through the weekly posting of learners' data sheets to assessors' and trainers' homes. Staff and learners at salons furthest from the company's Ashford base have regular contact with other managers and staff.

26. The company's management information system is satisfactory and provides managers and staff with sufficient analysis of data and information to make well-informed decisions about training. A range of data about recruitment, learners' progress, and the company's performance are analysed and depicted graphically for monthly staff, management and assessor meetings. The company had trailed a new and more complex system shortly before inspection, but had decided that current needs did not justify its adoption. There are long-term plans in place to monitor the appropriateness of the existing system as the company continues to expand.

27. There is ineffective management of key and basic skills support for those learners with identified needs. Learners do receive support. There are no clear systems for establishing the correct type or level of support required. There is no monitoring of the effectiveness of support, and no measures in place to reassess learners' needs after support has been given.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

28. MCHA promotes equality and opportunity effectively. The company's policy is detailed, clear, and established to ensure that learners are provided with the necessary training and support. Some of the equal opportunities documentation for learners is written in complicated language, though it is always discussed with learners to ensure understanding. Aspects of the policy statement are directly linked to training activities and management actions. Of the current learners, 2 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 2 per cent are men. Publicity materials and visual images displayed at MCHA present positive images of under-represented groups. Recent marketing campaigns have focused on encouraging under-represented groups into hairdressing, and advertising gives a clear indication that all learners will be given support to succeed. The company had allowed one learner to develop a flexible learning programme of training to take into account family responsibilities.

29. During the 12-week induction programme learners receive an equal opportunities work pack. This is discussed with learners who are expected to complete two tests to show understanding of its contents. Learners also watch a video about equal opportunities within the workplace. Acknowledgement of equal opportunities, forms

part of the learners' agreement to move from induction into the full learning programme.

30. In addition to the work pack, video and associated discussions, learners receive very good further training after their induction that confirms and improves their understanding of equality of opportunity. Inspectors observed one very good learning session which reinforced understanding of equality of opportunity developed at induction. The learners responded very well to the session and produced some imaginative group and individual work.

31. An adequate amount of data are collected about ethnicity, additional learning needs and learners' progression from various learning programmes, but there is not sufficient action taken to make the best use of these data. The company has held a number of meetings to discuss ways to make more use of the data available. There is a specified member of staff who takes responsibility for equality of opportunity within MCHA. There is also an equal opportunities committee, whose meetings are minuted and reviewed by senior management. Equality of opportunity is a standard item on a range of internal meeting agendas including managers', assessors', and learners' meetings. There are appropriate plans and resources in place to provide support for learners with mobility difficulties.

32. Learners' are aware of what they need to do should they encounter any problems in their training. Communications are good between staff and learners and any issues are resolved effectively. The company has a clear complaints procedure that is understood well by learners.

33. MCHA has a new salon agreement that clearly states the employers' roles and responsibilities towards learners and must be fully accepted before any employer is allowed to take MCHA's learners.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 3**

34. There is thorough monitoring of health and safety at MCHA's premises and partner salons, and learners have a good understanding of the health and safety issues particular to their profession. At induction learners are given a full briefing on the hazards associated with the use of hairdressing chemicals, and on ways to safeguard against dermatitis. Learners are able to give full and clear accounts of the information they had been given. In addition to compliance notices, in training areas and in staff rest areas, there are displays of health and safety materials. The training manager or the general manager conduct visits to salons which are joining MCHA's learning programme or accepting work placements. A very detailed inspection of premises is carried out against a checklist which is signed off by the employer and MCHA's manager. Shortfalls in safety equipment or provision are recorded and a follow-up letter sent to the employer stating a clear timetable for remedying problems. Only when the full checklist is satisfied will an employer be signed up for training. Regular checks are made to ensure that partner salons maintain the required standards of health and safety for learners.

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35. Internal verification is satisfactory. There is regular sampling of all MCHA's and work-based assessors' activity. Assessors are given clear feedback with guidance notes on how to rectify problems. The internal verifier conducts interviews with learners to check that they understand the assessment process, and any learners' concerns are discussed during assessors' meetings.

36. There is satisfactory review and observation of teaching and training activity. Teaching observation is carried out on a regular basis, and involves all MCHA's and work-based staff. The training manager observes learning sessions and then meets with trainers to provide feedback. This process enables trainers and assessors to improve their work. Records of the process are insufficiently detailed and formalised.

37. The company's self-assessment process is satisfactory. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths and some of the weaknesses found by inspectors. The process leading to the production of the self-assessment report involves assessors, administrative staff and managers. Drafts of the report are circulated among groups of staff for comment and amendment before it is finalised. Staff fully understand the report.

38. The quality assurance mechanisms are currently under development and quality assurance improvement measures are not yet established. There is an operations manual that sets out the main quality assurance procedures and processes, including timescales, reporting mechanisms and responsibilities for such aspects as health and safety, learners' feedback, partnership codes and agreements, lesson planning and review, monitoring of learners' progress, and internal verification. Many of the individual elements of the quality assurance system do not relate to each other and do not have set timescales for activity. The training manager has overall responsibility for quality assurance and is currently conducting a review of the operations manual to link processes more closely and improve staff understanding of quality assurance. Staff understand the importance of quality assurance, but some do not understand the mechanisms in place to monitor activity and bring about improvements.

39. There are mechanisms for collecting and analysing learners' feedback, but these are inadequate. Learners' views are collected at various times during the learning programme, and after all learning sessions, but there is no clear timetable of activity in this area and some groups of learners have been surveyed more often than others. There are variations between the frequency and ways that responses were collected from MCHA's own learners and those from other employers. Telephone interviews and most of the learners' questionnaires do not provide a sufficient level of anonymity for respondents. Data from surveys and questionnaires are analysed by the general manager and depicted graphically for other managers to review. Minutes of assessors' meetings and management meetings show that learners' feedback is discussed and acted on where relevant.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	28	2

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

#### Strengths

- very good training environments
- good induction
- good learner support
- good retention and achievement rates on advanced modern apprenticeship

#### Weaknesses

- poor understanding of key skills by staff and learners
- inadequate short-term targets

### Achievement and standards

40. There are good retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices. For 1999-2000, the retention rate was 86 per cent, and the achievement rate was 43 per cent. At the request of the local LSC, in August 2002 MCHA took over the learners of another provider whose contract had been withdrawn. Most of these learners were making very slow progress towards completing the modern apprenticeship framework, and a number were approaching the end of their funding period by the time they were transferred to MCHA. The effect of the transfer upon MCHA's retention and achievement rates is reflected in the current data. The learners who were transferred to MCHA are now making good progress with two having completed their full framework with a further four having completed it, but awaiting final verification. The retention rate for 2000-01 is 100 per cent. For 2001-02, 100 per cent of starters remain in learning.

41. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory for foundation modern apprentices. For 1999-2000 the retention rate was 60 per cent with an achievement rate of 60 per cent. During 2000-01 there was a sharp decline in both rates following the withdrawal of two salons from MCHA. This meant that all but one of the learners were withdrawn from that year's intake. In 2001-02, the achievement rate was 11 per cent with 55 per cent of learners still in learning.

42. Learners are able to develop good practical hairdressing skills across a broad range of styles and contexts. Throughout their training, learners become accustomed to commercial salon pressures and on the completion of their learning programmes are able to produce good work in such settings. Learners dealt effectively with appointment

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bookings and responded professionally to clients. Portfolios of evidence are well organised and maintained, and learners fully understand them.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1995-96								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	3		4		4		7									
Retained*	3		3		4		6	86									
Successfully completed	0		0		0		3	43									
Still in learning	3		4		4		2	29									

\*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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	9		9		6		5									
Retained*	0		4		1	17	3	60									
Successfully completed	0		1		0	0	3	60									
Still in learning	8		5		1	17	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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
NVQ Training	2001-02																
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	1															
Retained*	0																
Successfully completed	0																
Still in learning	1																

\*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

### Quality of education and training

43. Learners have very good training environments. Salons are well resourced and operate to a high commercial standard. Learners are able to develop a range of multi-

tasking skills unavailable in many training environments. There are sufficient chairs and spaces for clients available in the training areas. There are good displays of images which reflect the challenges and rewards of the modern hairdressing industry. There is a good range of professional products available for learners to use, and an equally broad range of good retail products available in salons.

44. A wide range of teaching methods is used to meet learners' different learning styles. Teaching materials are of a high standard and all learners are issued with home study packs to support their theory work. Learning sessions were judged to be from good to very good and none were judged to be unsatisfactory. All off-the-job training sessions are supported by lesson plans that generally describe the learning activity and a method of assessing learners' understanding. There is one trainer to every four learners, which is a good ratio, and learners receive a high level of individual support throughout their training sessions. Learners who experience problems with their theory work are given individual support on an individual basis. Trainers are commercially experienced and work to a high standard, with current commercial experience in the hairdressing industry.

45. Induction is good and takes place over a period of 12 weeks. During this period learners are able to decide if hairdressing is the right career path for them. Learners are given clear guidance on their NVQ and what is required to enable them to achieve it. In addition to initial assessment of basic skills, which takes place during induction, learners also complete a series of assignments that help identify other additional needs, and to identify the learner's preferred learning style. Health and safety training covered during induction enables the learner to complete the relevant unit within their NVQ. Learners are also given detailed and up-to-date information on skin care and the ways to help prevent dermatitis. Equal opportunities are covered at this time and learners are introduced to the company's equal opportunities policy. Learners fully understand the topics covered during induction. For example, learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues, which is reinforced throughout their training.

46. Learners receive good support from staff. There is good pastoral support and learners have good working relationships with staff. Staff frequently become involved in helping learners solve problems that arise within the workplace. Learners' meetings take place on a monthly basis to give them the opportunity to discuss their training issues with the management of the company. The company director usually chairs these meetings. Individual support is given to learners in both their practical and theory work. Learners are provided with text books by MCHA. During theory learning sessions, learners are encouraged to consider the ways in which the subject could be presented to meet their learning needs. To mark progress, learners receive a certificate for each of the units of their NVQ they complete. Celebration of NVQ achievement is marked by a presentation evening where the learners style four models and demonstrate their skills to staff and parents.

47. Arrangements to assess learners' literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory. All learners are tested during induction to determine their levels of literacy and numeracy skills. Systems are in place to provide support to those learners identified as needing

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additional support, particularly with assignment and theoretical work. This support is given on an individual basis. There is no evidence in learners' files of what work is covered during these support sessions. Some learners do not understand the support and process. There is no evidence of any structured provision of basic skills or re-testing to record developments.

48. Assessment practices are satisfactory. There are adequate procedures in place to plan assessments. Most learners are assessed at the appropriate stage in their learning programme. Assessors give guidance to learners' on how to improve and seek out assessment opportunities. Assessors meet on a regular basis, at least six-weekly, to share good practice and receive updates from the internal verifier. Assessors fully understand the procedures for internal verification and how they operate.

49. Learners are set short-term targets that in some cases are not specific to the learners' NVQ. Progress reviews take place every 12 weeks, at MCHA. Learners understand their short-term targets but are unclear about what they need to do to achieve them. Progress reviews do not take place with the employer. However, all employers are made aware of their learners' progress on a monthly basis, and can comment on their progress. There is some evidence of linking off-the-job training to on-the-job training.

### **Leadership and management**

50. There is poor understanding of key skills by staff and learners. Learners are unable to say which key skills level they are working towards. Some learners do not know what key skills they were expected to complete and do not understand the relevance of the key skills to their NVQ and how are assessed. Assessors do not reinforce key skills during theory and practical training sessions. Employers have a poor understanding of key skills and the type of evidence that can be collected from the workplace. Learners are still making good progress towards their NVQ. Managers have set out plans to rectify the poor understanding of key skills among staff, but it is too early to assess the effectiveness of the plans.

51. Internal verification is satisfactory. There is a long-term sampling plan, which includes all MCHA and work-based assessors. Verification takes place on a regular basis and there is an effective method of recording, which can be tracked through portfolios. Learners are questioned by internal verifiers to establish their understanding of the NVQ and the assessment process. This information is then used in feedback to assessors. Where new assessors are employed, the sampling of their work increases until they are sufficiently experienced.

52. Employers have good contact with the company director and managers of MCHA. They have sufficient information on their learners' progress and are able to contribute to progress reviews. Equality of opportunity is reinforced at the progress reviews and health and safety issues are adequately covered.