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## **Michaeljohn Training School Manchester How to narrow the achievement gap**

### **Summary**

Michaeljohn Training School, Manchester (MJTS) has a reputation for providing good quality hairdressing training and is particularly strong at providing additional learning support to learners with minimal entry qualifications to ensure they achieve apprenticeships. The provider requested an LSIS organisational health check (OHC) to find out how they could improve quality even further. Many actions were undertaken following the health check. This case study focuses on how MJTS narrows the achievement gap and how they reviewed processes and improved their use of data analysis following the health check to ensure they are fully inclusive.

### **About Michaeljohn Training School (MJTS)**

Michaeljohn Training School (MJTS) is a private training provider based in central Manchester. MJTS delivers training from these premises and a small base in Oldham. Some training is provided on employers' premises. MJTS employs 29 staff including assessors, trainers and internal verifier. The company provides intermediate and advanced apprenticeships in hairdressing and has some provision for learners aged 14 to 16, and a range of assessor and initial teaching qualifications for established hairdressers. MJTS recruits learners from across Greater Manchester and Oldham. Unemployment in these areas, particularly in Oldham, is higher than the average rate for England.

### **The challenge**

Michaeljohn is a highly regarded training provider in hairdressing. The company has won many awards including the Inspiring Information, Advice and Guidance Bronze and Silver Awards from Connexions. MJTS was the first provider in the country to achieve the LLUK/LSIS Equality Framework, Achieving Strand. The training school is a Centre of Excellence for Health and Safety. Even with all these accolades management is not satisfied and is always striving for improvement. Michaeljohn approached the LSIS Improvement and Development Service and requested an OHC. This is a diagnostic assessment of fitness for purpose of the organisation to meet current and strategic needs, particularly those arising from the quality and improvement requirements of the organisation. Michaeljohn thought that an independent assessment of their quality assurance would help them improve even further.

One of the company's strengths is the support that it offers to learners, particularly those who have additional learning needs. Many learners have few or no entry qualifications. In 2010/11 over 67% of intermediate

apprenticeship learners had literacy, numeracy or language support needs. About 7.0% of learners are from minority-ethnic groups and 10% are male. Through the use of Equality and Diversity Impact Measures, MJTS increased the percentage of male learners by 1% in 2011/2012. The company was keen to find out how it could find better ways of measuring distance travelled and further analyse data to target support and ensure recruitment reached all groups.

### **The activity**

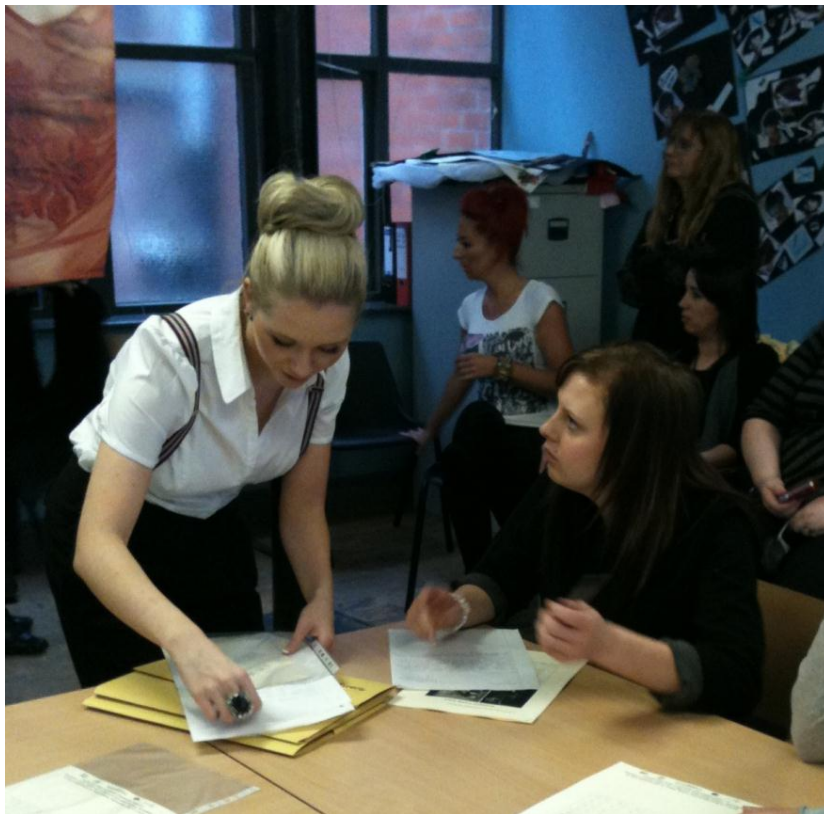
LSIS advisers carried out an OHC in June 2011. The OHC resulted in a series of recommendations all focused on moving the provider from 'good' provision to 'outstanding'. The OHC recognised the strength of Michaeljohn in operating an open recruitment policy, followed by support, and suggested that improved monitoring would demonstrate distance travelled and 'showcase' the impact of support on the learner experience. Immediately after the OHC, Michaeljohn senior managers produced an action plan. The plan encompassed all the recommendations for the OHC and included a review of all documentation that records the support for additional learning needs and an action point to devise a distance travelled chart for additional learning support.

So what is it that Michaeljohn does to narrow the achievement gap?

Firstly, marketing activity is regularly reviewed to ensure it is inclusive. The company holds regular widening participation days for employers and learners MJTS has made good of Aim Higher initiatives and regularly invites international celebrity hairdressers to demonstrate up to date skills. The provider also provides opportunities for learners and employers to showcase their work. MJTS has a comprehensive school partnership programme offering 14-16 year old learners valuable vocational skills, literacy and numeracy support and accreditation of the Intermediate Diploma in Hairdressing. All learners had positive progression into education or the Apprenticeship in 2010/2011.

Learners may be recruited without having found a placement with an employer. In this case, Michaeljohn prepares learners for interviews. They give help with producing a CV, give money for bus fares, style hair and make up and make sure the learner is suitably dressed. This initial support boosts confidence and ensures the learner finds a suitable placement. During initial, advice and guidance (IAG), extensive information is collected about learners at different stages. Learners are banded according to risk. High risk would indicate social or financial problems and at need of intervention from the provider. Initial assessment is used to identify literacy, numeracy needs, dyslexia, dyspraxia and colour blindness. Combined with assessment of skills and dexterity MJTS builds an individualised programme for the learner. Once on programme, each learner is issued with a comprehensive learning agreement which has all the information about the results of initial assessment and programme in one place. The presentation of this document is visually appealing and easy to read. It also monitors where learners are on programme as every unit and aspect of the specification are listed and recorded when complete. This learning agreement informs the progress review. All additional support needs are included in the agreement – 'up front' not as add ons. Every learner is given an individual support plan for literacy and numeracy. This ensures that those with additional learning needs are not

marginalised. The learners without additional learning needs can simply record their achievements and practice of the skills on the same document. Learners own these documents and work with assessors to achieve the skills. Work is underway to develop the recording system electronically using Learning Assistant a City and Guilds approved electronic portfolio system. None of this would work without staff commitment and training. Sharing of information is vital to the support and assessors are fully aware of learner profiles. In addition, some staff train to be specialists in numeracy or literacy. With the document review complete and work started on developing an electronic system, senior managers turned their attention to analysing data as precisely as possible to see if there were any particular ethnic groups, age groups or learning needs where progress was below par. Their own internal system can pinpoint learner achievement from point of entry through each level according to gender, age, ethnicity and area of social deprivation. The next step was to link the internal analysis to the Pellcamp management information system (MIS) for detailed data analysis and reports.



### **The outcomes**

Michaeljohn has been assisted by Pellcomp and now has an internal MIS system that can show any small differences in achievement at any level between different groups. Analysis can be made by gender, age and ethnicity or by area of social deprivation or any combination of factors.

This data analysis gives hard evidence for the self assessment report showcasing the great work in learner support and demonstrating distance travelled for learners.

The data is also crucial to drill into the detail of cohort groups to analyse data for performance management and to produce the Single Equality Scheme annual report.

Documentation for recording learner progress emphasises equality of opportunity throughout via its presentation, key messages and accessibility for all.

### **The impact**

The effective additional learning needs support of intermediate apprentices ensures that 65% of learners move from Level 1 key skills to Level 2 or 3 on the Advanced Apprenticeship programme.

Success rates are above national averages for all groups.

Latest success rates show that the timely achievement gap between learners with and without ALN is only 1.7%.

The Ofsted inspection report from 2011 comments on

- The help that MJTS staff provide in times of need and crisis
- The very approachable staff and states

‘Young people aged 14 to 16, including those with complex needs or at risk of dropping out of education, achieve well, enjoy learning and progress to further learning’

### **The lessons learned**

There are great benefits to learners owning their programme and progress. Visually attractive documents with images relevant to their vocation make the programme recording documentation appealing and contain all the records so that learners and assessors can always see progress. This can be replicated on an electronic system.

Commitment of staff to learner support is crucial to success in narrowing the achievement gap. This is developed through sharing of strategies and key information, continuous staff training and staff understanding the impact of their support.

### **Useful links**

<http://www.mj-training.co.uk/>

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