Makers Academy Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2539248
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Type of provider:	Independent Learning Provider
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Makers Academy Limited, has been providing training in software development since 2012. The organisation started delivering levy-funded apprenticeships in August 2018. At the time of the visit, 168 adults and 12 apprentices aged 16 to 18 were on a level 4 software developer standards-based apprenticeship. Most of the apprentices are working in London, with others based in different parts of the country including Bristol and Peterborough.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?
                                            Significant progress

Leaders and managers have a clear strategy for providing training in the digital sector which fully meets the requirements for apprenticeships. They have a clear intent to transform lives through training. They do this successfully by delivering a flexible model of training. Coaches teach a well-structured curriculum that prepares apprentices to become confident learners. Managers worked closely with employers and industry experts to develop the curriculum. As a result, apprentices develop substantial knowledge and skills that enable them to work independently as software developers.

Leaders and managers have a very good understanding of the quality of their provision. They use self-assessment and performance management processes effectively. They analyse feedback from apprentices and employers incisively, to inform their curriculum. They have a clear overview of the apprentices' progress and have thorough processes in place to identify any concerns. Consequently, they have identified accurately the areas to improve and have implemented appropriate improvement actions.

Leaders and managers are highly committed to training and developing their staff. They ensure that all staff are experienced in their roles. Coaches undertake regular professional development so that their subject knowledge remains current. They share best practice and current research to improve their teaching skills. Consequently, teaching is of a high quality.

Leaders and managers recruit apprentices through a comprehensive assessment of their prior knowledge and skills to ensure they are on the right programme. They have put in place thorough initial advice and guidance processes and careers advice. Staff ensure that all applicants match the employer and job requirements through their interview and selection process. They ensure that apprentices and employers are clear about the expectations of the apprenticeship. Leaders work with employers who commit to supporting apprentices' on- and off-the-job training. As a result, most apprentices remain with their employer and complete their training.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?   **Significant progress**

Coaches teach a challenging curriculum in a logical order which meets the needs of the employers and apprentices. For example, they teach emotional intelligence workshops early in the programme alongside more technical content such as computer coding. This ensures that apprentices have an increased self-awareness of their own behaviour and its effect on their teams. Consequently, apprentices learn to be effective team members and autonomous learners.

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours through their programme. Most apprentices start with little or no prior knowledge of software development but rapidly learn essential technical skills, such as Ruby programming and software testing. Apprentices develop a good range of interpersonal and communication skills. They learn practical strategies which improve their team work. The 12-week intensive block release at the beginning of the programme enables apprentices to acquire the fundamental skills and knowledge prior to their placement. Apprentices then develop their knowledge and skills further through projects and assignments, working in close liaison with their employer.

Coaches provide high-quality teaching through carefully planned workshops and learning activities. Most apprentices have a good understanding of end-point assessment and the grades they are working towards. They know what they need to do to improve. Coaches frequently check knowledge and understanding of apprentices through discussions during weekly progress reviews. As a result, apprentices can confidently recall previous learning and put knowledge into practice in their technical roles.

Coaches monitor the progress of their apprentices well through monthly face-to-face meetings in the workplace. Coaches make good use of online media platforms to maintain close communication. They keep thorough records to identify and act if an apprentice falls behind. However, a few of the employers are not fully aware of the progress of their apprentices. As a result, at times, they are unable to provide timely in-work support.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?   **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have created a sound culture of safeguarding within the organisation. Risk assessment and safeguarding compliance processes are effective. Leaders carry out pre-employment checks for new recruits. All staff have completed appropriate training on safeguarding, British values and the 'Prevent' duty. Designated safeguarding officers review actions from the 'Prevent' risk assessment annually. They maintain links to local safeguarding boards efficiently.

Leaders and managers have developed a thriving learning environment. All apprentices have access to qualified mental health first aiders and an emotional intelligence and well-being coach. Apprentices have regular meetings with their coaches and most attend meditation and yoga sessions to refocus and learn better. Learners feel safe, valued and well looked after.

Staff do not regularly discuss issues about radicalisation and extremism with apprentices and employers. As a result, apprentices have a vague understanding of related risks and are unable to link these to their job roles.

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