

The Coders Guild Ltd

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2626854
Name of lead inspector:	Chloe Rendall, Her Majesty's Inspector
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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.

The Coders Guild Ltd is a digital training provider with a mission to increase opportunity and diversity in the digital industries and to target skills shortages in software development. It received a contract to deliver standards-based apprenticeships in November 2019 and began to deliver apprenticeships in March 2020. There are currently 15 apprentices on the software developer apprenticeship at level 4. All apprentices are aged 18 or over and are employed nationally in the digital skills industry.

Leaders continued training activities with most apprentices and employers when COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions started.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have a clear rationale for the apprenticeship programme that they offer. They recruit staff with the relevant subject expertise and current industrial experience to enable apprentices to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they require to work in the coding industry. Apprentices can apply their learning successfully at work and are more employable as a result.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that includes all the components required by the apprenticeship standard that they deliver. In addition, they liaise with key stakeholders, including major media companies, to identify specific digital skills required in the industry and design the curriculum to meet these needs. Employers

value the knowledge that their apprentices develop in addition to coding, such as debugging, enabling accessibility and testing.

Leaders and managers work well with employers to recruit apprentices who are suitable for an apprenticeship. Employers value the close working relationship that leaders have with them that helps to ensure that apprentices are on the right apprenticeship at an appropriate level. Leaders ensure that employers fully commit to their responsibilities when taking on an apprentice. Apprentices receive their allocation of protected time to complete off-the-job training.

Leaders and managers maintain close oversight of the progress that apprentices make from their starting points. They make good use of information about the skills and knowledge that apprentices have at the start of the programme to plan and provide the specific support that apprentices need. Leaders realise that, as the provision grows, they need to ensure that they fully and accurately record apprentices' off- and on-the-job training.

Leaders identify the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision effectively. However, they do not yet have appropriate governance arrangements to provide challenge and scrutiny. Leaders rightly recognise the importance of external oversight and scrutiny as they grow their apprenticeship provision, and they have begun the process of establishing governance for the organisation.

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

Trainers plan and sequence the curriculum effectively so that apprentices develop basic programming skills first and then extend their skills further through their on-the-job training. Apprentices develop their coding skills through building websites and online applications for their employers and customers. As a result, they swiftly develop the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers need in their businesses.

Trainers use their industrial experience well to develop apprentices' understanding of coding and software development. They work with apprentices to link project work to real-world examples. As a result, apprentices successfully practise and apply their learning and produce a good standard of work that shows a secure understanding of key concepts.

Trainers use effective teaching techniques, including when teaching online. They start with simple activities that become progressively more complex to enable apprentices to develop a deeper understanding of coding. For example, apprentices design an online calculator using basic programming skills for the template and design, and then use more complex skills to make the calculator function.

Trainers check how well apprentices can apply their knowledge and skills in the workplace, such as when using specialist software to build websites. Apprentices can identify where they are able to use acquired knowledge and skills in their job roles, such as how to debug and use advanced version control.

Staff provide helpful feedback in monthly and quarterly reviews on how apprentices can improve further. Most employers are fully involved in reviews and provide feedback on the progress that their apprentices make. However, a small minority of employers are not informed well enough of the progress that their apprentices are making.

Staff provide apprentices and employers with useful information at the start of the programmes about the curriculum and the training programme. Apprentices feel well prepared for their programmes and most are fully aware of how their programme is assessed. A small number of newer apprentices do not recall the arrangements for end-point assessment.

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

Leaders follow safe recruitment processes. They ensure that all staff have appropriate clearance and references before joining the organisation.

Trainers ensure that the curriculum models best digital-industry practice in safeguarding. Apprentices learn ways of preventing unauthorised criminal access to their online systems. For example, they learn about techniques used by hackers to access systems and can defend themselves from risk of attack.

Leaders consider the well-being of apprentices and ensure that apprentices are not exposed to risks from harm. They ensure that employers are appropriate to mentor apprentices and that employers' premises are safe.

Apprentices feel safe. They have a basic understanding of safeguarding, but cannot recall learning about risks and threats local to them.

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