

Founders and Coders CIC

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 2656257

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 2022

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.

Established in 2014, Founders and Coders CIC (FAC), based in North London, provides apprenticeship training in software development. FAC gained a contract to offer apprenticeships in 2019. They enrolled their first apprentices in April 2021. At the time of the monitoring visit, FAC had 30 apprentices enrolled on the level 4 software developer standard. All apprentices were over 19 years old.

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 purpose and rationale for their apprenticeship programme, to equip apprentices with current knowledge and skills to work in software development. They have successfully adapted their well-established coding programme to the apprenticeship standard. They have put in place sufficient off-the-job training. For example, apprentices complete an intense 12-week coding course at the start of their programme.

Leaders recruit apprentices with integrity. Apprentices go through a rigorous pre-selection and assessment process. Staff match apprentices well to the most suitable employers. Employers really appreciate this. They recognise that apprentices are very well prepared for their apprenticeship. Apprentices have good knowledge about the sector before they start their apprenticeship. As a result, the vast majority of apprentices remain on their programme.

Training facilitators who teach apprentices have good technical and up-to-date coding and software knowledge. However, the team has very limited experience in teaching and assessment. Leaders do not provide facilitators with training and development to help them improve their teaching skills. Leaders and those responsible for governance recognise the need to increase the education and

apprenticeship expertise within the team.

Most apprentices start the programme with the required knowledge of English and mathematics. Leaders have put in place appropriate arrangements for those apprentices who need to complete qualifications in these subjects as part of their programme.

Leaders complete a suitable range of activities to assess the quality of the apprenticeship programme. They use the results of these activities to make appropriate changes to the content of the curriculum. For example, leaders collect feedback from apprentices about the taught workshops. Leaders and training facilitators react swiftly to points raised by apprentices. They make changes to how quickly facilitators move through the curriculum content in the workshops. However, leaders do not evaluate sufficiently the quality of teaching and assessment. They do not have a clear enough understanding of how well apprentices learn.

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

Leaders have sequenced the curriculum in a logical order. During the intense 12-week course, apprentices gain knowledge and skills that build in complexity over time. They learn to write software specifically for the World Wide Web. This includes client-side and server-side coding. As a result, apprentices apply new skills quickly to create basic web servers. They then follow this by designing websites that are easy to use and to navigate. Towards the end of the 12-week course they work with clients to build intuitive web designs.

Apprentices improve their communication skills. They develop the confidence to explain technical concepts to clients. They write clear project reports. Employers recognise that apprentices gain very relevant skills in coding during the 12-week course. This means that apprentices apply these skills quickly when they join their employer. For example, apprentices are competent to complete basic coding tasks for websites and contribute to the business immediately.

Apprentices enjoy their learning. They appreciate the experience their training facilitators have in software development. Facilitators give apprentices helpful feedback on their work. The feedback directs apprentices specifically on how to show their new knowledge, skills and behaviours in their portfolios of work. However, during workshop sessions, facilitators do not check learning frequently enough. They teach the content of the topic clearly but do not assess apprentices' understanding.

Facilitators ensure that the vast majority of apprentices attend frequent progress reviews. Most apprentices' line managers attend the reviews. However, it is not always clear how the line manager contributes to the reviews. There is not enough

focus in reviews on the progress apprentices make at work, nor on their areas for development.

Apprentices benefit from a range of talks by industry experts and previous FAC graduates during their programme. This gives apprentices useful information about the different career pathways available to them in software development.

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

Leaders have put in place appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures for adult apprentices. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has completed relevant training for the role. Staff supporting the programme undergo appropriate safeguarding training. The DSL has recently updated the information that apprentices receive about safeguarding.

The DSL understands the provider's responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. They have put in place an appropriate policy around this. However, staff have not completed relevant training about the 'Prevent' duty.

Apprentices feel safe at work and in their learning environment. They know whom to report concerns should they have any. However, they have underdeveloped knowledge about online safety, the local risks to them and around the dangers associated with extremism and radicalisation.

Apprentices benefit from frequent contact by provider staff to check on their well-being. They appreciate the pastoral support and care shown by staff. Apprentices enjoy positive workplace environments where they are treated fairly and with respect.

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