

Inspection of Makers Academy Limited

Inspection dates:

23 to 26 August 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Makers Academy Limited (Makers) is an independent learning provider based in Tower Hamlets, London. Makers has been providing training in software development since 2012. Makers started teaching levy-funded apprenticeships in August 2018. At the time of the inspection, there were 198 apprentices on the level 4 software developer and 90 apprentices on the level 4 DevOps engineer standards. The majority of apprentices were above 19 years of age and only two apprentices aged 16 to 18 were at the provider.

Most of the apprentices work in London, with others based in different parts of the country, including Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Manchester, Bristol and Leeds.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices thrive through studying in a diverse and inclusive environment that represents the multicultural communities in which they live and work. Staff fervently promote an inclusive learning environment where individuals' backgrounds are valued. They discuss cultural and religious events regularly, and do not tolerate discrimination based on different faiths and beliefs. Consequently, apprentices recognise, respect and celebrate their differences well.

Apprentices have extremely positive attitudes to their apprenticeship studies and work. They behave exceptionally well and have very high attendance and punctuality. They are taught by skilled teachers and, as a result, are very motivated, confident and resilient, which positively impacts on their success in the workplace. They work collaboratively in teams on project-based tasks and develop solutions when designing new applications and software platforms.

Leaders have put in place a variety of good activities to support a wider curriculum which extends beyond the technical knowledge and skills apprentices learn. Apprentices have access to volunteering and mentoring opportunities. They network within tech communities and establish connections that support their professional development.

Leaders focus strongly on apprentices' mental and physical well-being. Apprentices can attend daily online meditation and mindfulness sessions and yoga classes. They have discussions with coaches about how to manage their workload and deal with stress. They receive regular online reminders to take breaks from online screen activity. Consequently, apprentices manage their learning particularly well through the intensive boot camp.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Governors and senior leaders have a clear rationale for offering apprenticeship programmes that meet technical skills gaps needed by employers, and to improve diversity in the digital technology sector. They have a strong commitment to widening participation through the programme and have successfully recruited female apprentices and apprentices from ethnic minorities.

Leaders and managers have carefully structured the curriculum, enabling apprentices to develop substantial new knowledge and skills over time. For example, apprentices benefit from an intensive block course at the start of their programme, to learn the necessary foundation knowledge in databases and the fundamentals of software programming using a simple and accessible programming code. This gives apprentices the knowledge they need to progress to using advanced programming techniques. The intensive initial training helps apprentices learn the key information they need to start their roles in their workplace.

Coaches have expert knowledge and experience in digital technologies. They use this competently to give apprentices clear explanations. They teach online

workshops and one-to-one coaching sessions to apprentices in a professional environment using appropriate industry tools.

Coaches use questioning effectively in their sessions to test apprentices' knowledge and check their understanding. They set high expectations of their apprentices and increase the level of complexity of their questioning when apprentices get an answer correct. Most apprentices recall their learning successfully.

Coaches give good support to apprentices in order to develop their independence with problem-solving. Apprentices complete frequent self-assessments and reflections on their learning and work. Employers report that apprentices become more autonomous because of their training. Apprentices perform to a high standard when handling complex technical issues and finding solutions for tasks they perform in their job roles.

Assessment coaches and technical coaches give apprentices very detailed feedback on their work. This includes feedback on apprentices' video submissions. Coaches help apprentices understand their mistakes and explain what they need to do to make the necessary improvements. As a result, apprentices produce work of a high standard.

Staff assess apprentices' prior knowledge and skills at the start of their programme accurately. However, they do not share this information with apprentices' coaches. As a result, coaches do not know about apprentices' particular individual learning and support needs early enough. They do not adjust the training to take account of this. Consequently, a minority of apprentices find the content of their intense course overwhelming and struggle with the amount of self-learning. They do not have a consistently good-quality learning experience.

Coaches prepare apprentices well for life in modern Britain by embedding fundamental British values into the curriculum. They skilfully establish a culture through their teaching that reflects democracy, freedom of speech and mutual respect. Apprentices learn how the rule of law is relevant to their job roles, through discussions and in their work about data protection.

Apprentices are very well prepared for their next steps. They participate in appropriately structured activities to practice and prepare for their examinations and final assessments. Most apprentices achieve their apprenticeship and a high proportion attain a distinction or merit. A large proportion of apprentices gain additional responsibilities and promotions within their organisations.

Too many apprentices do not have impartial career advice and guidance. They do not know about the opportunities the apprenticeship programme could offer for them beyond their immediate workplace.

Employers are fully engaged in their apprentices' programmes. They understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff communicate regularly with employers, who contribute well to reviews of apprentices' progress. As a result, employers are able

to make suitable arrangements in the workplace to ensure apprentices can apply their learning while at work. They ensure apprentices have enough time to complete their studies.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have implemented robust safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure the safety of their apprentices. They ensure that designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) are suitably trained to provide appropriate support to apprentices. DSLs work well with apprentices' employers and external agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of apprentices.

Apprentices feel safe and know who to report concerns to. They receive suitable information and online training on safeguarding, particularly on the specific risks related to their job roles and the digital technology sector. They fully understand their responsibilities in handling information safely when working on different digital and cloud-based platforms.

Staff do not always discuss wider safeguarding topics in sufficient detail with apprentices. They do not have frequent discussions around issues such as sexual harassment and local risks related to terrorism and extremism in apprentices' placement areas. Consequently, apprentices do not have a detailed understanding of these risks and are insufficiently prepared to deal with, for example, harassment in the workplace should it occur.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that apprentices are provided with impartial careers advice and guidance, so they are fully aware of the different options available to them at the end of their apprenticeship.
- Leaders should ensure that coaches have access to information about apprentices' prior knowledge, skills and behaviours before apprentices begin the intense initial training course. Coaches should use this information to consider apprentices' individual support needs and adapt their training where appropriate.
- Leaders should ensure that staff support apprentices to develop a good understanding of wider safeguarding risks, such as sexual harassment and local risks related to terrorism and extremism.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2539248
Address	Makers Academy 50–52 Commercial Street London E1 6LT
Contact number	020 3817 8870
Website	www.makers.tech
Principal/CEO	Claudia Harris
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of education, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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