

# Inspection of The Coders Guild Ltd

Inspection dates:

31 May to 2 June 2023

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Apprenticeships

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

The Coders Guild Ltd is a digital training provider based in Leeds. It has a stated mission to increase opportunity and diversity in the digital industries and to target skills shortages in software development and testing. It received a contract to deliver standards-based apprenticeships in November 2019 and began to deliver apprenticeships in March 2020. At the time of inspection, there were 28 apprentices on the level 4 standard for software developer and fewer than five on the level 4 standard for software tester.

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

Apprentices are strongly motivated and committed to their learning. They appreciate the support and direction that they receive from their knowledgeable trainers and coaches. Most apprentices are in supportive employment settings with employers who give them the time they need for study. As a result, apprentices are keen to use their new knowledge and skills to benefit their employers' businesses. For example, level 4 software developer apprentices appreciate the importance of ensuring minimal downtime for clients during domain transfers.

Staff set clear expectations for learning and behaviour, including for attendance and punctuality. Apprentices attend their training on time and demonstrate positive and respectful behaviours towards their peers, their employers and staff.

Leaders and staff provide information to apprentices about wider development opportunities such as conferences and forums, but do not explore the extent to which apprentices engage in these. Leaders cannot therefore be assured of the extent to which apprentices benefit from these opportunities to develop and extend their interests and talents.

While apprentices receive initial guidance to ensure they are on the right programme to meet their needs, most do not receive detailed guidance beyond this on progression opportunities for software developers or testers. Leaders are taking steps to enhance the careers guidance that they provide to apprentices.

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

Leaders have a clear vision for the apprenticeship programmes that they offer. They have selected programmes to address the demand for junior software developers and testers regionally and nationally. Leaders are committed to upskilling within the digital professions to meet employers' need for a pipeline of new talent.

Leaders and managers have effective quality and self-assessment processes in place and have accurately identified strengths and weaknesses in their apprenticeship provision. They are taking appropriate actions to improve the quality of training, reviews and assessment. However, many of the interventions have only been in place for a few months, meaning it is too soon for them to have had a measurable impact.

Leaders have adapted their model of teaching over the last six months. They have recruited technical trainers and coaches who have specialist industry knowledge and pastoral coaches with the skills to support apprentices' personal development. Staff are positive about working for the provider. They recognise and accept the need to develop their training and coaching practice to benefit apprentices. Technical trainers plan and sequence the curriculum logically to reflect evolving industry changes and requirements. Trainers check apprentices' learning thoroughly in sessions through questioning, open discussion and review of course content. Technical coaches

develop apprentices' knowledge and skills further through projects specific to apprentices' workplaces, such as creating websites. However, in a few cases, staff do not follow up verbal feedback on assessed work with written feedback that apprentices can refer back to, meaning a few apprentices are unsure about what they need to do to improve.

In too many cases, tripartite reviews of progress are not sufficiently developmental. Reviews take place with apprentices and their technical coaches every 12 weeks, but apprentices' employers often do not attend or are not sufficiently involved in target setting. This means that targets set for apprentices often focus on completing assignments or administrative tasks, rather than on developing or consolidating their knowledge, skills and behaviours against the apprenticeship standards specific to their workplaces. This slows apprentices' progress.

Most apprentices benefit from appropriate support as they approach their end-point assessment (EPA). Staff share helpful and practical techniques and strategies to help apprentices to prepare. In a few cases, apprentices struggle to balance the demands of work and study when approaching EPA, which slows their progress. Leaders recognise this and have taken appropriate action to support those apprentices who have fallen behind. Of the small number of apprentices who have taken their EPA to date, all have passed, with just under half achieving merit or distinction grades.

The small number of apprentices who require tuition and support to improve their English and mathematics skills receive it, and successfully achieve their functional skills qualifications.

The very small number of level 4 software tester apprentices have made slow progress, in part due to staff shortages. In a few cases, staff do not consider these apprentices' starting points or individual needs when planning their programme, meaning apprentices spend time on topics about which they already have considerable knowledge, rather than new learning. As a result, software tester apprentices have fallen behind. Managers have worked hard to rectify the staffing issues that have affected apprentices' progress, and these apprentices are now catching up.

The governing body has been very recently established. It includes industry experts and apprentice representatives. Those responsible for governance understand and are committed to the role. They bring extensive experience of education and of the digital sector.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers promote a culture of safeguarding. They have effective policies, procedures and arrangements in place to ensure safe recruitment and to protect apprentices from risks such as radicalisation and extremism. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL both have appropriate training and

experience for the role. Pastoral coaches use 'hot topics' such as county lines to raise apprentices' awareness of local risks.

Apprentices are safe and feel safe. They know how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism. They know how to recognise risks, including those associated with online working, and how to report any concerns.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Provide helpful developmental feedback to apprentices following assessment in a format that they can refer back to and which helps them to improve further.
- Make use of apprentices' starting points so that the content of their programmes meets their individual developmental needs.
- Involve employers more consistently in the review process and use the reviews to set meaningful progress targets for apprentices linked to the apprenticeship standards.
- Promote wider development opportunities with apprentices to enrich their apprenticeship curriculum.
- Ensure that apprentices receive helpful and relevant guidance on their careers options and progression opportunities to support them fully in relation to their next steps with their employers.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	2626854
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<b>Contact number</b>	0113 460 1024
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thecodersguild.org.uk">www.thecodersguild.org.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Crispin Read
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent training provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the contracts and programmes manager 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

Cath Jackson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Wiley	Ofsted Inspector
Tina Ockerby	Ofsted Inspector

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