

Inspection of Founders and Coders CIC

Inspection dates:

26 to 28 July 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Founders and Coders CIC (FAC) is an independent learning provider based in North London. FAC started to offer apprenticeships in April 2021. The provider offers digital apprenticeship standards. At the time of the inspection, there were 32 apprentices on the level 4 software developer apprenticeship based at the provider site in Finsbury Park and 12 apprentices on the level 7 artificial intelligence (AI) data specialist apprenticeship based in North Greenwich.

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

Apprentices thrive by being immersed into a community of computer software specialists. Most apprentices are changing their careers and find the learning opportunities and their job roles exciting and fulfilling.

Leaders use a peer-led approach for much of the training. While this suits the majority of apprentices, it does not sufficiently meet the needs of a significant minority. Course facilitators rely too much on apprentices appraising each other's work. They do not appropriately check that apprentices' knowledge is secure or provide sufficiently tailored support before they move on to new topics.

Apprentices benefit from helpful preparation before starting their apprenticeship. They learn fundamental knowledge during an intensive training period at the beginning of the course. For example, apprentices studying the level 4 software developer apprenticeship spend 12 weeks at FAC's premises, where they gain useful fundamental programming skills. They also learn the key principles in problem-solving processes and how to work with a product owner. This enables them to work on projects immediately when they attend their workplace.

Apprentices are at times unclear about which training sessions they are required to attend. Staff do not set expectations well enough with apprentices, and they do not adequately monitor which apprentices attend training.

Apprentices gain a thorough understanding of how to give and receive effective feedback to each other. They become highly motivated and adept at facing the challenges of working in software development. Most apprentices value the study skills they are taught to help them to continue learning in a fast-paced industry.

Apprentices appreciate the support they receive through well-being checks. They feel safe in the welcoming and professional environments at both the Finsbury Park and North Greenwich sites.

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

Apprentices, most of whom do not have any previous experience of software development, swiftly gain new knowledge and skills. This is mostly because they are highly motivated to complete their project work. For example, level 4 apprentices learn the different roles in a software development team and how to create their own application programming interface. Apprentices discuss their work with each other and receive feedback from experienced developers. Consequently, apprentices develop the confidence to build, test, improve and present their work in a professional context.

Leaders and managers do not work closely enough with employers to plan apprentices' training from the outset. They do not plan suitably individualised

training, particularly for apprentices studying at level 7. They do not ensure that the timing of what apprentices learn in off-the-job training aligns with the tasks apprentices are carrying out at work. A minority of apprentices are not clear about what they will study at each stage of their apprenticeship once they complete the initial intense training period. However, most employers provide suitable training opportunities at work, such as shadowing colleagues and reviewing the work apprentices produce.

Course facilitators do not have sufficient teaching expertise or knowledge of the requirements of apprenticeships. They do not check apprentices' understanding frequently enough. They do not have clear oversight of the overall progress apprentices make. As a result, apprentices do not routinely receive the expert support they need to improve on any weaknesses.

Leaders do not identify accurately enough apprentices' prior knowledge and skills at the start of the programme. For example, they do not check whether level 7 apprentices have suitable mathematics skills to understand the more complex content of the course. For the few apprentices who do not hold English or mathematics qualifications at level 2, staff provide resources for apprentices to improve their skills in these subjects. Nearly all apprentices who take their examinations in these subjects pass first time.

Course facilitators have good subject expertise and industry experience. They use this to provide clear explanations to apprentices, which includes work-based scenarios and examples from current industry practice. For example, on the level 7 apprenticeship, course facilitators refer apprentices to digital tools and software used by market leaders. Level 4 apprentices work through a series of tasks and take on the different roles in a software development team to echo the professional environment. Apprentices repeat similar tasks in the workplace and apply what they have learned with fluency.

Too many apprentices leave their apprenticeships early. They do not always value the qualification they will receive over the skills and knowledge they gain. As a result, they move to other jobs before they complete their apprenticeship. Where apprentices do stay for the duration of the apprenticeship, they are clear about the requirements for their final assessments, and most achieve a high grade. Nearly all apprentices remain in employment after they complete their apprenticeships and gain additional responsibilities or promotion.

Staff introduce apprentices to a range of employers and link them with experienced mentors. Previous FAC students return to give apprentices good advice about self-employment, further employment and study opportunities. Leaders host a range of professional talks about the wider technology industry. Staff and apprentices share useful information on social media platforms about external events and competitions. For example, a few apprentices attend conferences and 'hackathons'. As a result, apprentices know about a wide range of professional routes available to them.

Leaders have suitable governance arrangements in place. For example, they receive valuable guidance on up-to-date technologies to update their curriculum. However, they have been too slow to implement advice from those who provide governance. Leaders meet with professionals with apprenticeship expertise but have only recently recruited a suitable team of operational staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff promote a positive culture of safeguarding. Staff make sure that apprentices know to report any concerns. Leaders have put in place clear policies and procedures to keep apprentices safe. They teach apprentices to be vigilant about their digital footprint and how to remain safe from fraud and hacking. Staff teach apprentices at the start of their course about the 'Prevent' duty and the dangers of radicalisation. However, they do not revisit this training. As a result, apprentices do not gain an in-depth understanding of how these topics relate to their work.

Managers are aware that risks to their apprentices include stress and excess workload. They provide an employee assistance programme for staff and apprentices to access counselling if they need it.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should work more closely with employers to individualise the curriculum for each apprentice, including taking into consideration apprentices' English and mathematics skills.
- Leaders and managers should implement their plans to train facilitators to teach apprentices effectively and check apprentices' understanding.
- Leaders should monitor more closely apprentices' progress and provide timely and expert support to help more apprentices finish their apprenticeship and achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders should set clearer expectations for, and improve their monitoring of, apprentices' attendance so that a high proportion of apprentices attend their training sessions.

Provider details

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Unique reference number | 2656257 |
| Address | Space4 2nd Floor 113-115 Fonthill Road Finsbury Park London N4 3HH |
| Contact number | 07727207226 |
| Website | https://www.foundersandcoders.com/ |
| Principal, CEO or equivalent | Dan Sofer |
| Provider type | Independent learning provider |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Main subcontractors | None |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the executive director, 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

Rebecca Jennings, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Saher Nijabat

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023