

Inspection of Code Nation Limited

Inspection dates:

10 to 13 October 2023

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Adult learning programmes

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Information about this provider

Code Nation Limited (Code Nation) is an independent learning provider based in Chester. Learners study level 3 cybersecurity and software development Skills Bootcamps (Bootcamps) for the digital sector. The Bootcamps are funded by Lancashire local enterprise partnership (LEP) and Cheshire and Warrington LEP. Training is carried out remotely through a virtual learning environment.

At the time of the inspection, there were 48 learners. Seventeen learners studied software development, four studied software development with data and 27 attended cybersecurity Bootcamps. Learners following software development and cybersecurity studied full-time programmes for five days a week over 12 weeks. Learners following software development with data studied for 20 days over 12 weeks. Most learners are unemployed, and all are aged over 19 years.

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

Learners enjoy the friendly and enjoyable online learning environment in which they study. Most learners take pride in their work and are motivated to achieve high grades. They feel valued by their instructors who are supportive and professional. Learners are happy at Code Nation. They appreciate the new skills and confidence that they are gaining. Almost all learners attend lessons regularly and on time.

Learners know more and can do more because of attending their Bootcamps. They apply the new knowledge they develop to different contexts. For example, learners studying cybersecurity carry out security checks on their home information technology (IT) devices. They share their findings, such as weaknesses in their own systems, with their peers. A few cybersecurity learners feel that they need to do a lot of independent study to keep up with the new topics they are learning.

Learners benefit from developing the skills that they need to gain employment in the digital sector. Software development learners work together collaboratively to develop the back end of a website and a database. They develop their resilience and problem-solving skills. Around one third of learners who have completed their Bootcamps have progressed into jobs, apprenticeships or further study. Most learners move into technology-related sectors including jobs as software engineers and full-stack developers.

Learners understand how to stay safe online. They spot phishing emails and advanced fee scheme scams quickly. Learners attend desk yoga and breathing classes to help them to stay mentally and physically healthy. Those who struggle with their mental health have access to a well-being officer.

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

Governors, leaders and instructors create an inclusive environment that meets the needs of learners. They set high expectations for learners through an ambitious and challenging curriculum. Leaders design the curriculum with employers so that learners develop the knowledge and skills that they need for their next steps. Software development learners learn how to make the front and back ends of a website functional before building their own website.

Leaders and instructors construct a logically sequenced curriculum that builds learners' knowledge gradually. Cybersecurity learners spend the first third of their Bootcamp learning security fundamentals, operating systems and hardware. They move on to web vulnerabilities, databases and Python. Towards the end of the course, learners use what they learn to complete a cyber auditing project. Most learners make good progress.

Learners benefit from high-quality education. Instructors are passionate about their curriculum. They are qualified practitioners and either hold or are working towards a teaching qualification. Instructors make use of well-devised resources and IT tools

to teach lessons. For example, cybersecurity instructors use an electronic version of the game 'Cluedo' to teach about code breaking and cyphers. Most learners develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Instructors find out what learners know and can do at the start of their Bootcamp. They use this information to tailor the curriculum to meet their needs and aspirations. Instructors closely monitor learners' progress from their starting points. They provide learners with precise and developmental feedback that helps them to improve. Instructors encourage learners who are already producing work to a very high standard to undertake further research.

Instructors create calm, business-like online learning environments. Learners behave professionally. They listen respectfully to others' ideas and opinions. Although learners can recall instructors telling them about the importance of fundamental British values at the start of their Bootcamp, they struggle to say how they apply them personally. Leaders rightly identified that this was an area for improvement.

Instructors teach the curriculum so that most learners transfer key knowledge into their long-term memories. Learners gain the knowledge and skills that they need to tackle increasingly complex tasks. For example, software development learners perform create, read, update, delete (CRUD) operations on a MongoDB database from a Node.js application.

Learners use clear and accurate written and spoken English in their reports and presentations. They have a sound grasp of technical terms such as malware and JavaScript. Learners develop mathematical skills to help them complete technical exercises correctly.

Learners feel the Bootcamp is preparing them well for a career in software development or cybersecurity. They are aware of the potential career opportunities open to them in these sectors. Learners enjoy the employer talks that they attend about working in the technology sector. The employability team supports them to develop a curriculum vitae and shares interview tips and techniques. Learners attend individual careers appointments at the end of the course. Leaders have identified that they need to provide broader careers guidance for learners who do not want to progress into the technology sector.

Leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. They have successfully improved their quality assurance and improvement practices. Leaders use the information that they gather from the observations of teaching and learning to inform the training that instructors attend. For example, they identified that the quality of feedback that learners receive was not precise enough. Learners now receive sufficiently detailed feedback that they use to improve their work.

Governors are experienced in the technology sector. They provide scrutiny and challenge to leaders about the rationale, content and sequencing of the curriculum. However, the reports that governors receive are not sufficiently evaluative. This hinders their opportunity to question leaders on aspects of the quality of education

such as the progress that learners are making from their starting points. Governors and leaders are planning to set up a quality board to provide greater scrutiny of the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Review the cybersecurity curriculum, particularly for those learners who are struggling to keep up.
- Provide ongoing training for learners on fundamental British values and how it applies to them personally.
- Provide helpful reports to governors that enable them to challenge leaders on aspects of the quality of education such as the progress that learners are making from their starting points.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2539252
Address	The Cloud 10 Boughton Chester CH3 5AG
Contact number	0333 050 4570
Website	www.wearecodenation.com
CEO	David Muir
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	28 to 31 March 2022
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of operations, 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

Alison Cameron Brandwood, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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