

# The Curious Lounge C.I.C (trading as the Curious Academy)

Monitoring visit report

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<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Richard Kirkham, His Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Address:</b>	1st Floor Pinnacle 20 Tudor Road Reading RG1 1NH

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Ofsted undertakes to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of adult learning provision where the provision offered is in scope for inspection. 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.

The Curious Lounge is an independent learning provider operating in Reading, Berkshire. It offers Skills Bootcamps in digital marketing and data analytics to mostly unemployed adults or freelance workers aiming to grow their businesses. At the time of the monitoring visit, 26 students were studying data analytics and 26 students were studying digital marketing.

### Themes

#### **How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant adult learning provision that has a clearly defined purpose? Reasonable progress**

Staff have created a purposeful curriculum to train those who are ambitious to progress their careers in digital marketing or data analytics. Leaders work closely with the local enterprise partnership to provide training that supports individuals to advance their careers.

Leaders work well with employers to understand developments within the sector. They chair useful advisory boards with employers to review the course content to make sure it stays relevant and explore opportunities for students to access the workplace. Those employers who have recruited individuals from the programme value the impact these employees have on their organisations.

Leaders ensure that suitably experienced trainers keep their knowledge up to date through continued professional development and close working relationships with other professionals within these sectors. Trainers use their expertise to bring content to life as they positively relate their teaching to real-life industrial examples.

Most students successfully complete their training, with many attending an interview as a consequence. A significant minority of students become employed as a result of their training.

Leaders use the views of students to make appropriate changes to the course. For example, students have requested an understanding of the psychology of colour in

marketing, which has now been introduced into the course. Leaders have not fully implemented quality assurance processes to fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of training. As such, trainers have not been supported to further develop their teaching practice.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals? Reasonable progress**

Students benefit from high-quality training. Students effectively develop the skills they need to be successful in their chosen careers. In digital marketing, students create avatars to help them effectively understand their target audience and focus their marketing strategies. They learn to use search engine optimisation effectively to improve performance on search engine websites. Students develop the skills they require to take the next step into employment.

Trainers help students to develop a wide range of professional skills and behaviours. Students improve their communication skills by presenting their ideas to one another and subsequently become resilient and at ease with their ideas being challenged. Students become confident in working and performing in business settings and display the qualities which employers require.

Students benefit from access to the latest industry-standard online applications. Students successfully use online tools to analyse website users' behaviours to inform marketing strategies. Students professionally use these resources and effectively apply their learning to produce high-quality final projects.

Trainers monitor students' progress effectively. Trainers regularly assess students' work to make sure they gain the required knowledge and skills before the completion of their final project. Students value the useful feedback they receive from trainers about their work. Students studying digital marketing prepare and present a marketing pitch to a real client, who provides professional feedback, in preparation for their future interviews. They understand how to improve their learning as a result, which many do.

Staff give students helpful careers advice and guidance. Students benefit from individualised support sessions, guest speakers who provide valuable insight into their chosen sectors and an employability week in which they update their CVs and social media profiles. This contributes to students rightly feeling well prepared for interviews and next steps into employment.

Leaders do not routinely identify students with additional learning needs at enrolment and, as such, do not provide prompt support from the start of training. When trainers later identify a student who requires additional support, this is implemented effectively.

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

Leaders have not taken the necessary measures to meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. They have not been sufficiently quick in implementing actions identified in the 'Prevent' duty risk assessment. Leaders have not ensured that students know how to keep themselves safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

The designated safeguarding lead is suitably trained to carry out their responsibilities. They ensure that staff are recruited appropriately. Leaders make sure staff are trained to identify and support those who may be at risk of harm. Students are trained to recognise the risks and dangers of abuse. They know who to contact in case they have a safeguarding concern.

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