

Inspection of The Curious Lounge C.I.C. (trading as The Curious Academy)

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 July 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Adult learning programmes

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

The Curious Lounge CIC, trading as the Curious Academy, is an independent learning provider offering Skills Bootcamps to learners who are seeking work or changing their careers. At the time of the inspection, there were 29 adults on courses, 19 of whom were studying digital marketing. The remaining 10 learners were studying data analytics. The Skills Bootcamps are taught in person, over 12 successive weeks, at the provider's base in Reading, Berkshire.

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

Learners thrive in the highly inclusive and nurturing learning environment that leaders create. Learners, who often have little or no relevant prior knowledge, develop substantial new technical knowledge and practical skills that have a transformational effect on their futures. Learners studying digital marketing learn how to create and configure websites, consider search engine optimisation (SEO) techniques and how to use social media to best support the marketing of their business. Learners studying data analytics grow from beginners to confident users of spreadsheets. They develop impressive data visualisation skills and knowledge of programming languages, preparing them well for employment.

Trainers know their learners' interests and career aspirations very well. They use this knowledge to create ambitious and personalised projects that motivate and challenge learners. For example, learners who are interested in housing analyse national housing data and those who are interested in the beauty sector analyse shifts in consumer trends. Learners present their findings confidently, lead peer discussion and act on feedback, preparing them exceptionally well for professional roles across a range of sectors.

Learners are exceptionally well supported throughout their studies and considerably beyond the end of the course, because trainers care about their development. Trainers continue to offer learners personalised career and technical guidance as well as providing a safe and professional office space for learners to interact with their peers and make new connections.

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

Leaders work with employers, stakeholders and learners very effectively to understand the latest skills developments in digital marketing and data analytics. Leaders use the valuable insights they gain to frequently review and update the curriculums so that they reflect rapidly evolving skills priorities. For example, leaders adapted the data analytics curriculum to include more advanced tools such as specific programming languages and data visualisation in response to feedback from learners and employers.

Leaders order the curriculums carefully and sensibly to enable learners to gain a secure and comprehensive understanding of foundational concepts before introducing them to more complex concepts. Digital marketing learners understand customer behaviour and avatars before learning about sophisticated strategies for SEO, social media marketing, and analytics. Learners draw together their cumulative learning to complete complex, contextualised final projects.

Trainers teach the content of the curriculum exceptionally well, using learner-led activities and discussions to promote deep consideration of topics and critical thinking. Trainers use their industry expertise to explain concepts clearly, often

skilfully illustrating important points with real-life examples. Trainers frequently bring in guest speakers to share their industry experience and help learners to understand current applications of the skills they are learning, such as social media marketing and website design trends. Almost all learners, including those who face disadvantage, complete their course successfully, either producing and presenting their final project or securing a job interview.

Trainers check carefully what learners know and can do throughout the course. They ask searching questions and review learners' work thoroughly. They use assessment, such as quizzes, to check that learners remember what they have been taught. Where trainers identify that learners have not understood a topic they adjust future teaching activities to close gaps in learners' understanding.

Trainers support learners to use appropriate technical language correctly. For example, digital marketing learners fluently use terms such as avatars, upselling opportunities and unique selling points. This helps learners to express their ideas accurately, clearly and concisely and prepares them well for work in their chosen industries.

Trainers use their well-honed expertise and significant industry experience to provide tailored careers advice and support to learners. Trainers meticulously help learners to source and understand the requirements of job roles. They also help learners to develop their CVs and prepare them exceptionally well for interviews. Data analytics learners complete the course with a portfolio of scenarios and problems that they have overcome as part of their learning. This helps learners to choose the right jobs to apply for that suit their talents and interests. This also provides them with real-life examples to use in interviews to highlight their skills. Almost all learners secure employment or self-employment in a related field.

Leaders have developed a highly effective culture of continuous quality improvement. They seek and act on student feedback and forensically track the experiences and next steps of students on completion of the course. They also seek the views of employers, particularly those who have hired course graduates, to check the suitability of the training and to ensure it meets industry expectations. Leaders prioritise effectively the improvements they want to make, placing learners' experience at the heart of these decisions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2748204
Address	The Curious Lounge 1st Floor, Pinnacle, 20 Tudor Road Reading RG1 1NH
Contact number	07810117638
Website	www.thecuriousacademy.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Matt Bovey
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 curator, 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

Sarah Alexander, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul James	His Majesty's Inspector
Roland White	His Majesty's Inspector

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