



**EDUCATIONAL OVERSIGHT INSPECTION OF PRIVATE FURTHER
EDUCATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE COLLEGES**

ISLINGTON CENTRE FOR ENGLISH

Full Name of College	Islington Centre for English
Address	97 White Lion Street, Islington, N1 9PF
Telephone Number	0207 2785553
Email Address	tim@letslearnenglish.org
Director	Mr Timothy Shoben
Age Range	11+
Total Number of students	249
Numbers by Age and type of study	14-16 20 17-18: 2 19+: 227 EFL only: 249
Inspection dates	6 – 8 November 2012

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the framework for Educational Oversight of private further education colleges and English language colleges. The inspection consists of a three-day team inspection of the college's educational provision.

The ISI is an approved educational oversight body authorised by the UK Border Agency to inspect privately funded further education colleges in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework, and English language colleges.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Standards for private colleges;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations to colleges outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of colleges, and by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to students, Government and the wider community. Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.

The inspection of the college is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on students. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the college, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the college or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the college's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

- 1.1 Islington Centre for English (ICE) is a private English language school in central London which opened in 2005. The school is in a large modern terraced building and has nine classrooms, a self-study area with computers and a student library. The school is managed by the proprietor, who is also the director. The school offers a range of full-time and flexible part-time courses and is a Cambridge suite preparation and examination centre. The aim of the school is to offer flexible and affordable English language tuition.
- 1.2 The school offers seven levels referenced to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The majority of students apply directly to the school and a minority through an overseas agent. Students undertake a pre-arrival assessment and web-based video interview. Students can join classes weekly. On arrival students undergo speaking and listening assessments alongside personalised advice on course and examination options.
- 1.3 At the time of inspection there were 249 students from 44 countries, with 166 attending full-time and 83 part-time. Twenty-two students were under 18 years, including 20 aged 14-16 years. All students under 18 years stay with vetted host families. All students study English language. There were more female students than male. The school has enrolled students with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE COLLEGE

2.(a) Executive Summary

	Section of the Standards	Grade awarded 1-4
3.	The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievement	1 Exceeds Expectation
4.	Students' welfare, including health and safety	2 Meets Expectations
5.	The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	1 Exceeds Expectations

- 2.1 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievement exceeds expectations. The admission and selection processes are well managed and implemented. The range of initial assessment processes results in effective level placement. Information available to students prior to and on arrival is comprehensive, clear and accurate. The curriculum is very well organised, responding to individual and bespoke group requirements, and offers an excellent range of examination and progression opportunities. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Lessons are very well planned and teachers employ a wide range of highly effective teaching methods which, alongside well-chosen resources, result in inspirational and motivating classes. Assessment is on-going, systematic and thorough and results in clear developmental feedback through regular tutorials. Students make excellent progress and examination success is exceptional.
- 2.2 Arrangements for health and safety and students' welfare meet expectations. Good systems and procedures successfully support the health and safety of students and staff. Management procedures are clear and well implemented. Risk assessments are available for the majority of external visits resulting in adequate oversight of health and safety management. Student attendance monitoring is efficient, with highly effective and managed systems for reporting student absence to the UK Border Agency (UKBA). The school offers students a good range of opportunities to support them in settling into the area. Academic and welfare issues are effectively identified with students offered appropriate and timely support. The school is well positioned for transport links and offers high quality facilities and classrooms. Students are able to access high quality homestay accommodation that is well organised and monitored by the school.
- 2.3 Leadership and management are excellent. The educational ethos, culture and academic direction are clear and well communicated. Relationships across the school are positive, friendly and result in highly effective communication. Leadership is open, honest and successful. The director successfully delegates responsibilities and there are well organised systems to monitor accountability. The school management structure is effective with all staff clearly focused on raising standards. The school appoints very high quality and capable staff that offer a very strong

commitment to students and the school. The quality assurance process is secure and supports effective planning and management.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with standards for Private Colleges

2.4 At the time of the inspection, the college met all the key standards for private further education colleges and quality is high. **The college exceeds expectations for the quality of education.**

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The college is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Create a central repository of general and specific risk assessments for external activities and visits.
2. Extend the current staff appraisal system to include target setting for continuing professional development and good practice sharing.
3. Ensure consistency in the application of the school's policy on student lateness.

3. THE QUALITY OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival

- 3.1 Assessment of students prior to and on arrival is very thorough and effective. Students' language competency and comprehension are assessed prior to or on arrival through a standardised placement test, web-based video interviews and in all cases a thorough speaking and listening assessment with an academic manager. As a result students are quickly and accurately allocated to the appropriate English proficiency level. Teachers receive assessment information on each student and this is used well in ensuring teaching responds to individual and group needs.
- 3.2 The school accepts students with SEND on an individual basis with the focus on ensuring the school can offer a sufficient range of academic and welfare support. The school has access to highly effective specific teaching support and a very good range of learning support methods and resources.
- 3.3 Students receive thorough and valuable information and advice prior to and on arrival at the school and this results in students who are very happy with their programmes. Students are well supported through assessment reviews and monthly tutorials to identify and discuss their personal aims in order for the school to create personalised learning and examination programmes.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.4 The curriculum and course provision is excellent. There is a clear policy and curriculum statement for all courses and examinations offered. Publicity materials clearly detail the provision on offer. The curriculum is well organised into seven levels linked to the CEFR and class groups reflect these levels well. The school offers Cambridge English language examination preparation courses and the school has extraordinary high achievement and progression rates across all levels. Courses on offer cover UKBA requirements, with students able to acquire a publicly recognised qualification.
- 3.5 Course content and classroom activities are well matched to students' individual and group learning needs. The school has very recently begun offering junior classes for students aged 14-16 years and these are very successful, entirely focused on group language requirements and students' needs. The school places the highest emphasis on individual needs and student outcomes. Retention on all programmes is outstanding and the vast majority of students complete their course. Students consider they are thoroughly engaged in their studies and well supported to meet their individual progress and achievement aims.
- 3.6 There is a well managed and implemented social activities programme offering students a variety of cultural activities and experiences.

3.(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning

- 3.7 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is outstanding. Overall teaching is excellent with the vast majority of observed lessons outstanding or very good. In a few lessons planning was less rigorous and students struggled to meet the planned outcomes. All teachers are skilled, well qualified and experienced, resulting in highly effective teaching methods and well-chosen and implemented class resources. Students consider they make very good progress, expressing very high levels of satisfaction with their classes and teachers. Students are actively engaged in their learning whether individually or in groups, and cross cultural exploration stimulates and motivates students. Classroom management is very good overall, although the school's student late arrival policy is not consistently applied, which results in some disruption to classes. Teachers demonstrate respect and sensitivity to students' needs with an emphasis on the importance of cultural awareness. Teachers promote and enhance students' self-confidence through well-chosen resources and facilitated classroom activities. Teachers display outstanding commitment to high teaching standards and student achievement.
- 3.8 The school places great emphasis on students making the most of their time, whether on full-time or part-time courses, and offers them a good range of independent self-study resources. Many students attend classes part-time and teachers are adept at identifying and supporting students to maximise language practice outside of school. Students value this individual language support. There are effective resources to support students with additional learning requirements. Homework is well integrated in all courses, set daily, assessed well and results in very effective feedback contributing to excellent student outcomes. There are two small but very well stocked libraries offering books and multimedia resources and a small self-study area with computers available for student use. Students make good use of these resources.

3.(d) Attainment and Progress

- 3.9 Students make outstanding progress, developing excellent language skills, knowledge and understanding. Throughout their time at the school progress is regularly monitored and assessed and timely feedback given to students. Teachers give students excellent advice on how to improve their skills in class. Clear indicators of learning and progress at each level are provided by fortnightly progress tests and monthly tutorials with their class teacher. All students confidently demonstrate extremely high levels of skill and learning in the classroom and are confident that they are making good progress. Students consider their work is both interesting and challenging and meets individual needs.
- 3.10 Student outcomes are excellent, with extraordinarily high examination success rates. Students report high levels of satisfaction with their progress and with the quality of advice given by the school on arrival and during their courses.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises (in line with expectations of educational institutions)

- 4.1 The school has due regard to health and safety and student welfare and meets expectations. Policies for the management of health and safety issues are well promoted and the school is a safe and comfortable environment for all. Security arrangements are effective and appropriate for the area. Students report that they feel safe at the school. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to mitigate risk from fire and other emergencies and these are reviewed annually. Fire equipment is monitored and checked twice a year by external consultants. Training has been provided for fire marshals and first aid and there is clear signage related to fire procedures and first aid provision across the school.
- 4.2 There are good policies in place for the risk assessment of the school and outside activities. Some general risk assessments are held centrally and are thorough and detailed. Risk assessments for some specific activities and excursions are not held or are less detailed, reducing the effectiveness of the system. There is a good system and effective procedures supporting students who are unwell or who have additional needs.
- 4.3 The school premises are very attractive and well maintained. Classrooms are good-sized, attractively decorated and furnished, well ventilated and have excellent sound insulation. There is reasonable access and facilities for students with physical disabilities.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.4 The school has excellent student registration records that are accurate and consistent. Student attendance is carefully monitored with good systems in place to identify students who miss lessons. Attendance rates are very good.
- 4.5 There are highly effective systems and procedures in place to ensure that if required, timely reports are made to the UKBA. The system is well-managed, consistently implemented and comprehensive records are kept. There is a clear and comprehensive procedure for the collection and refund of fees and deposits.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.6 Pastoral support for students is very good. Regular recorded tutorials are comprehensive and allow welfare and accommodation issues to be raised. Any student concerns are passed to academic managers for prompt investigation. Teachers actively encourage students to integrate and the anti-bullying policy is well promoted from arrival. Such problems between students are uncommon. Students are given clear guidance on the school's policies and safety procedures and withdrawals from programmes are very rare.

- 4.7 Students receive very good support, guidance and care and consider they are well looked after. The school policy is to assess students with SEND prior to acceptance. Relationships between students and staff, and amongst students themselves are friendly and supportive with excellent opportunities to explore and share cultural differences.

4.(d) Child protection

- 4.8 Until a very recent change in policy the school has had negligible numbers of students under 16 years of age. There are appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place and there are good systems in place to ensure these students are well monitored and supported. The staff handbook offers good guidelines for safeguarding students. Responsibility and accountability for these students is very clear and there are high levels of management focus in this regard. Management and teaching staff training needs have been effectively identified. External management training has been identified, registration completed and training is imminent.
- 4.9 All permanent staff are subject to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks prior to or on appointment, and accurate and appropriate records are maintained at the school.

4.(e) Residential accommodation

- 4.10 The school places high regard on the provision of good quality accommodation in central London and has delegated this aspect to accredited agencies. Systems to manage these agencies are well established and successful. Homestays are registered in accordance with national requirements and are safe, high quality and offered through a range of options reflecting the different needs of students. All students under 18 years are routinely placed with CRB-checked host families. Student feedback on accommodation is regularly sought and issues dealt with tactfully and promptly. Students told inspectors that they appreciate and value the additional learning opportunities offered by staying with host families.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Leadership and management are outstanding. All legal compliances are in place. The educational direction is clear and the school aims have been successfully shared across the whole institution. The relationship between the director and managers is positive in contributing to effective oversight, with good systems and processes in place to monitor and ensure the future success of the school. Oversight and control are maintained by the director with a clear focus on strategic direction, ensuring legal compliance and meeting all legislative requirements. Academic management is outstanding with clear accountabilities and is discharged very effectively. Managers are set clear targets and there are excellent systems in place to monitor and ensure success. Managers are experienced and very effective in identifying areas for development or improvement.
- 5.2 All relevant policies are in place. The school has very effective systems to fulfil statutory compliance and the well-being of students under 18 years. The director has both a clear understanding of the importance and prioritisation of this aspect and to ensure legal compliance and raising standards. The director and senior managers have clear oversight and understanding of the importance of safeguarding principles that ensure compliance with national standards. There are clear plans with nominated accountabilities and good management systems to monitor progress as the school expands this area of their provision.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.3 There is a clear and effective management structure with delegated responsibilities and accountability focused on raising standards. The director's vision for the future of the school is well communicated and there are efficient systems in place to monitor performance. There are outstanding formal and informal communication methods across the school, ensuring students receive excellent support. Management meetings are regular and result in effective control of strategic and operational issues. The school has a very good and well integrated management information system that strengthens the activities of the business and academic management. Self-evaluation is sufficiently accurate and critical and generates the school's development and action planning.
- 5.4 The school is highly supportive of and very successful in attracting, recruiting and motivating exceptionally high quality staff. Staff are supported by committed and highly skilled academic managers to comply with school policies and practice. Observations of teaching and learning are well integrated and there is an emerging peer observation process with plans to create a higher focus on continuing

professional development. Staff performance management is a current priority and is under external review. A new system is planned to link academic performance to appraisal reviews and individual target setting.

- 5.5 The school displays a strong commitment to teachers' professional development, with a good range of internal and external opportunities. Teachers feel well supported and emphasise their satisfaction with the teaching environment at the school.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.6 Informal and formal processes for monitoring are highly effective and result in continuous review and timely management actions. Quality assurance is embedded in the school's culture and review cycle through a wide range of methods including academic achievement data, student questionnaires, complaints and informal feedback. Student feedback is actively sought, results in clear actions and is used well to identify school priorities.
- 5.7 Students report that the school is highly effective in obtaining and responding to their views and comments. Inspection findings support this. The complaints procedure is clear and appropriate. Complaints are handled as a priority and directly impact upon quality assurance and improvement planning.

5.(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks

- 5.8 The school is committed to securing high quality staff. The recruitment process is very well managed with comprehensive records. There is a good policy, with clear guidelines and processes to support recruitment. Staff are well qualified and experienced and all permanent staff undergo appropriate suitability checks prior to appointment.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.9 The website provides clear and detailed information about the school and courses. All relevant policies are available. Information presented on the website and in school literature is clear and accurate.
- 5.10 All the information required for the inspection process was provided in an efficient and timely manner.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietor, reviewed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions. The responses of staff and students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mrs Jacqueline Lawrence	Lead Inspector
Mr David Godfrey	Team Inspector
Mr Dave Malachi	Team Inspector
Ms Diana Morriss	Team Inspector