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

CAMBRIDGE SEMINARS COLLEGE

(Company number - 08183749)

Full Name	**Cambridge Seminars College**
Address	87 – 89 Cherry Hinton Road, CB1 7BS
Parent name	Camsem Investment PLC
Telephone Number	01223 300123
Email Address	Phil.scherb@csc.uk
Website	www.csc.uk
Principal	Mr Philip Scherb
Proprietor	Camsem Investment PLC
Age Range	16+
Total number of students	4
Numbers by age and type of study	18+: 4 FE only: 4
Inspection dates	**25 – 27 March 2025**

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PREFACE

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

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is designed to improve the quality of education on offer to international students who attend UK colleges through student visas.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Educational Oversight Standards;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations 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. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

1.1 Cambridge Seminars College is a private educational institution established in 1981. Since June 2021 the institution has been owned by Camsen Investment PLC (CIP) with the two proprietors of CIP also being directors of the college. The college is led by the principal and its two directors. The principal is supported by a small management team. The college aims to ensure every student can fulfil their academic potential and achieve their life aspirations.

1.2 The college offers A Level, Foundation, pre-masters and pre-doctoral programmes. It also provides Academic English courses and preparation for IELTS, Cambridge and LanCert examinations. Students may study GCSEs on a one-to-one basis if required, but only alongside an existing course. The college offers a short academic experience course in the summer months to closed groups of students.

1.3 Selection for courses is based on initial assessment of previous academic attainment, English language skills and future learning goals. Enrolment to GCSE and A Level courses occurs in September, January and March. For Foundation courses, enrolment occurs in September, January and March. Pre-masters and pre-doctoral courses can start at any time. EFL programmes are offered throughout the year and are of variable length. Courses are open to students aged 16 years and older.

1.4 At the time of the inspection, there were 4 students at the college, 3 female and one male. No students are under 18. There are two students on the Biomedical Science Foundation course, one student taking AS level and one student taking GCSEs. Two of the students have first languages other than English. Two students are currently diagnosed with learning difficulties or disabilities and have Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCP) in place. The college provides its own residential accommodation and also offers homestay accommodation.

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2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

2.1 **The college school meets expectations for the quality of education**. At the time of the inspection, all Key Standards for Educational Oversight were met and quality is good.

2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievement is good. Educational direction is clear and effectively managed. The curriculum is good. It is responsive to students' needs and ensures a good selection of high-quality courses is available, with clear progression routes into higher education. Initial assessment is good and accurately ensures courses are well matched to individual students' ages, aptitudes, and aspirations. Overall teaching is good, with examples of excellence. Lessons are well-planned and effectively delivered. Teachers use a good range of teaching methods to engage students and promote active participation. Teachers are knowledgeable, skilled, and experienced. Teaching fosters confidence and independence. Effective support systems ensure individual needs are identified and met. Additional support is well-coordinated, contributing to positive student outcomes. As a result, students achieve well relative to their starting points, benefiting from a well-structured and supportive learning environment. Completion rates are excellent.

2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is good. Effective measures ensure a safe environment for students and staff. The college building is well-maintained, clean, and fit for purpose, with effective health and safety policies in place. Fire safety meets legal standards, with regular drills and up-to-date fire equipment maintenance. Admissions and attendance registers are satisfactory. However, authorised absences are not always recorded correctly. This affects the reliability of data used to monitor student engagement. Procedures for contacting absent students are effective. Pastoral care is excellent. Students benefit from a well-structured support system that promotes their personal development, wellbeing and academic success. Staff are highly responsive to individual needs and provide timely guidance and effective interventions ensuring strong support and progress. A thorough induction helps them settle in and identify any undisclosed special educational needs. Relationships between staff and students are outstanding. Safeguarding for under-18s is excellent. The college implements a clear, comprehensive and effective safeguarding strategy which senior leaders regularly monitor to ensure its continued effectiveness. Students report that they feel safe and well supported.

2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership, and management is good. The college demonstrates strong ownership and oversight, with a clear and well-defined educational direction that is understood by staff and students. Policies and procedures are well-structured, regularly reviewed, and effectively support the quality of education and student care. The college's management structure is good with well-established job roles, responsibilities, and lines of communication. Staff understand their roles and work well together to maintain a safe, supportive, and well-managed learning environment. Quality assurance mechanisms are good and

effective. Senior leaders identify key priorities and implement action plans, which are carefully monitored for impact. Regular class observations and appraisals contribute directly to improvements in teaching and learning. Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks are good. The college is successful in recruiting and retaining highly qualified and experienced staff. Rigorous recruitment procedures, including thorough suitability checks, ensure that all staff appointments meet the highest standards. The provision of information is excellent, with the college website being clear, comprehensive, and fully aligned with the Standards.

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

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

3.1 The assessment of students prior to and on arrival is good. The college acquires a significant quantity of detailed information about the students' prior attainment such as previous academic qualifications and details of any additional support needs before admission which is then verified on arrival.

3.2 Initial and diagnostic assessment is used effectively to provide an accurate basis on which to place students on appropriate courses. Consequently, the college is successful in ensuring courses are suitable for the individual students. Teachers use the assessment information effectively in their planning. The college provides effective support in the use of standard English, enabling students to fully benefit from their studies. Consequently, learning programmes and activities are well matched to students' ages, aptitudes and language capabilities.

3.3 Information, advice and guidance are good and enables students to make informed choices about whether the courses meet their individual needs and aspirations. The website contains appropriate detailed information regarding the college, its policies and the curriculum on offer.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

3.4 The suitability of course provision and curriculum is good. Students are well educated in accordance with the college's aims and objectives. The college has a clear statement of educational purpose underpinned by appropriate schemes of work which ensure a suitable learning experience for students. The curriculum is personalised which ensures that courses are suitable for each individual student's age, aptitude and language capability. Courses are in accordance with those outlined on the website. Consequently, course competition rates are very high.

3.5 The Pre-Masters and Pre-PhD Programmes and the A Level courses on offer to students on Student Visas are full-time courses which include at least 15 hours a week of classroom-based daytime study and as such meet the definition of an approved qualification as set out in Home Office guidance. Currently, no students are on Student Visas.

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

3.6 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning is good. In addition, there are examples of excellent teaching. Teachers are very well qualified and have a good knowledge of their subjects and are suitably skilled and experienced in their specialist areas. They plan lessons effectively, maintaining a clear focus on learning objectives and employing a variety of appropriate and engaging activities. Class time is used efficiently, and teachers demonstrate a thorough understanding of their students' needs, prior achievements and capabilities. This insight is used to tailor the

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level of challenge and pace accordingly, fostering active student participation and continuous progress.

3.7 A wide range of effective teaching strategies are used to motivate and engage students. High-quality classroom resources, including the use of appropriate technology, support learning well. Teaching encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and development. As a result, students make good progress relative to their starting points.

3.8 Excellent arrangements are in place to support individual students. For example, regular tutorials ensure that additional support and other needs are accurately identified and appropriate support put in place. Small class sizes allow teachers to differentiate content and provide individuals with either support to address weaknesses or stretch and challenge as appropriate. Regular tutorials and small class sizes also allow teachers to track and review student progress.

3.9 Teaching promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It encourages respect for other people including those with protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act of 2010.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

3.10 Attainment and progress are good. Students make at least expected progress towards their individual learning goals given their starting points and most go on to the institution of their first choice. Students learn quickly and leave well prepared for the next stage of their education. Student report that they are making good progress and this is confirmed by lesson observations.

3.11 The college teaches national courses which are externally examined as well as university foundation and post-graduate courses validated by partner universities.

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4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises

4.1 Arrangements for the health, safety and security of the premises are good. Comprehensive and detailed policies and procedures ensure the wellbeing of students and staff while maintaining a secure environment. A comprehensive health and safety policy is in place with clearly allocated responsibilities. Staff and students receive high quality information training on health and safety during their inductions. All outside activities are appropriately risk assessed and mitigations are put in place to ensure the safety of all participants.

4.2 The college maintains a high standard of fire safety which meets legal requirements. Fire drills are conducted regularly and demonstrate efficient evacuation procedures. Maintenance certificates for fire equipment are up to date, and comprehensive fire risk assessments are in place. Fire action notices are prominently displayed, and fire exits are clearly signposted throughout the college. Fire protection equipment is appropriately positioned. All electrical equipment is subject to routine safety testing to ensure compliance with safety standards.

4.3 The building is fit-for-purpose and very well maintained. Classrooms are appropriately sized to accommodate the student groups. Toilet facilities are adequate in number and well maintained. Free drinking water is readily available. Security arrangements are good. Entry is via a single door which is controlled by reception. The building is covered by closed-circuit television. Staff and students report that they are safe within the building. Catering services are not provided on the premises. The college is maintained to a high standard of tidiness, cleanliness and hygiene. Lighting, heating, sound insulation and ventilation are appropriate, well-maintained and support a comfortable and effective learning environment. The décor is modern, welcoming and maintained to a suitable standard. Furniture, fixtures and fittings are appropriate for the age and needs of the students.

4.4 A well-documented first aid policy is effectively implemented. The college has an adequate number of certified first aiders and maintains accurate records of first-aid incidents.

4.5 There is adequate access to the college for all staff and students, including those with special needs and disabilities. A ramp, a downstairs toilet and downstairs classrooms allow for suitable access for wheelchair users.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

4.6 Registration and attendance at the college are satisfactory. The college maintains accurate admission and attendance registers, ensuring that absences are accurately recorded. However, authorised absences are sometimes recorded as being present. This leads to inaccuracies in attendance records and affects the reliability of data used to monitor student engagement and hinders timely identification of attendance issues that require intervention. Appropriate procedures are in place to monitor attendance and

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course completion rates, including prompt communication with students who miss classes. Procedures for reporting to the Home Office, as well as the enrolment and attendance requirements for students on Student Visas are secure and fully understood by relevant staff. However, no such students are currently enrolled.

4.7 Clear procedures are in place to govern the collection and refund of fees and deposits. Fair and clear procedures for the collection and refund of fees and deposits are provided on the website.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

4.8 Pastoral support for students is excellent. Student learning support needs are identified very early on and has a significant impact on their achievement and progress. Students receive very high levels of support from tutors on personal issues. There is a culture in which students and staff are aware of safety and all students feel safe, including when using the internet and during any off-site activities. There are excellent relationships between staff and students and amongst students.

4.9 There is an effective induction in which students are introduced to the college's facilities, policies, support services and expectations. This enables them to settle quickly to their studies.

4.10 An appropriate social programme is in place. However, the number of students is too small to support a full social programme, but the college organises occasional social and cultural activities to encourage student interaction and enhance their overall experience.

4.11 Students know how to access support or complain if they need to but there are no reported incidences of bullying or harassment. Students receive excellent advice and guidance which enables them to make highly informed choices about their progression to higher education. Students' questionnaire responses confirm they are very happy at the college and would recommend it to others.

4.(d) Safeguarding for under 18s

4.12 Safeguarding for under18s is excellent. The college has a clear, comprehensive, detailed, effective strategy for safeguarding, which is frequently monitored by managers. The college follows national safer recruitment guidelines. Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) checks have been completed and recorded on all staff. The central record of safeguarding checks is comprehensive and accurate. All staff receive comprehensive training in safeguarding prior to commencement. Staff are aware of the signs that a student may be at risk and take appropriate action. Students report that they feel safe at the college.

4.13 The premises also serve as a test centre for English language examinations. These examinations are conducted in a separate section of the building, which has its own entrance and toilet facilities. This arrangement ensures that examination candidates

do not come into contact with college students, thereby effectively safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of the students and ensuring their education remains uninterrupted.

4.(e) Residential accommodation

4.14 Arrangements for accommodation through homestays and college residence are excellent. Arrangements for accommodation are well managed and monitored. The residency is appropriately registered as an HMO in accordance with local authority requirements. The residence is spacious, well maintained, well decorated, well equipped and well furnished. Students speak highly of their accommodation.

4.15 Arrangements for homestays are excellent. Initial guidance given to homestay providers is excellent. The relationship and communication between the homestays and the college is very positive. Homestay accommodation is effectively monitored. The homestays provide a very useful addition to the education provided by the college.

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5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

5.1 Ownership and governance is good. The proprietors are actively engaged and provide effective oversight, ensuring alignment with the aims of the college. They diligently fulfil their responsibilities regarding educational standards, financial planning, and investment by maintaining regular contact with senior leaders, scrutinising performance data and monitoring the implementation of development plans. The college's educational direction is well-defined and clearly understood by the staff.

5.2 The proprietors maintain a comprehensive understanding of the college's daily operations. They hold scheduled governance meetings in which they scrutinise reports, budgets and development plans and ensure that decisions are informed and evidenced based. They actively contribute to the college's strategic development by regularly evaluating progress and holding leaders to account. They effectively monitor progress while providing both support and constructive challenge. Policies and procedures are well-structured, regularly reviewed, and effectively support the quality of education and student care.

5.3 The proprietors effectively fulfil their responsibilities for safeguarding, welfare, health, and safety by ensuring effective policies and procedures are in place which are reviewed regularly and which are fully compliant with statutory requirements. They meet all statutory obligations concerning students under the age of 18.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

5.4 The college's management structures and responsibilities are good. Leaders and managers effectively implement policies and ensure the safeguarding of students. Job roles, responsibilities, and lines of communication are clearly outlined in the college's organisational chart. As a result, staff understand their duties, work efficiently as a team and contribute to a safe and well-manged learning environment.

5.5 Leadership and management provide a clear educational direction and uphold high standards of education. They set a well-defined vision which is shared across the college. They establish high expectations for teaching, learning and student achievement.

5.6 The self-analysis report is detailed, well-structured and accurately reflects the college's performance. The report clearly identifies priorities for development. The annual report and self-assessment report reflect the management's ability to conduct realistic assessments based on a thorough analysis of a range of data. Clear priorities for improvement are identified and successfully implemented.

5.7 The college is effective in recruiting and retaining well-qualified staff. Staff development initiatives ensure that staff receive appropriate training for their roles.

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Feedback from staff, gathered through questionnaires and group meetings, indicates strong support for leadership and a high level of job satisfaction.

5.8 The proprietor puts in place appropriate policies and procedures which are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain effective, up to date and compliant with current regulations. Effective budgeting ensures funds are allocated appropriately to key areas such as staff, learning resources and facilities.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

5.9 Quality assurance is good. Feedback from regular student questionnaires is systematically used to support quality assurance and identify areas for development. A comprehensive analysis of various data sources such as student achievement and progress data, attendance rates, student feedback and teaching observations is conducted during the annual review to identify trends and establish action points that drive continuous improvement.

5.10 Management effectively sets key priorities through evidence-based analysis, setting clear and measurable objectives, implementing defined action plans and continuously monitoring impact. As a result, the college demonstrates continuous improvement.

5.11 Teaching performance is rigorously evaluated through formal lesson observations, student feedback, and examination results. Annual appraisals effectively consolidate this evidence to recognise strengths, identify areas for improvement and set clear, measurable goals for the year ahead. These insights inform both the college's continuing professional development (CPD) programme and the individual development targets of teaching staff. As a result, regular class observations and appraisals lead directly to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

5.12 The complaints procedure is clearly defined and appropriate, with provisions for external arbitration when necessary. Students confirm their awareness of this policy.

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

5.13 Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks are good. An established recruitment policy ensures the appointment of well-qualified and experienced staff. All mandatory pre-employment checks, along with additional checks aligned with best practices, are conducted prior to employment.

5.14 Staff records are meticulously maintained and regularly updated. A comprehensive central record is systematically monitored by senior staff to ensure compliance and accuracy.

5.(e) Provision of information

5.15 The provision of information is good. The website is clear and contains all the information required in the Standards. Prospective students have access to accurate,

relevant information to inform their study choices. The college was very responsive in providing information in a timely manner.

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6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

In order to further improve the good quality provided, the college should:

- Ensure that students who have an authorised absence are not recorded as being present.

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 one of the proprietors. Inspectors visited residential accommodation. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Mr John Rooney	Lead Inspector
Mr Saul Hyman	Team Inspector

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7. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY CHECK

ISI has shared a summary of financial sustainability data with the Home Office.