

Broadly their functions are to keep in constant touch with the day-to-day running of the Schools, to ensure that the statutory Approved Schools Rules are observed, and to deal on the spot with a number of minor matters within the competence of [word missing] Headmasters, and to report to the Division matters which ought to be brought to the notice of the Managers.

The Inspectors are also responsible for advising the Division on the staffing arrangements and expenditure of individual schools.¹⁹

Case study – Shirley Oaks

The files we inspected contained reports on a number of Lambeth children's homes inspected by HOCD, where relevant we have referred to these through the report. In view of the Inquiry's specific interest in Shirley Oaks we have provided a more in depth examination of those files.

Shirley Oaks came under the control of the new London Borough of Lambeth as of 1 April 1965. HOCD had inspected it when it was run by the LCC. Commenting on a report of an inspection of 20 to 28 April 1964, the Superintending Inspector for London Region (Central) wrote that:

Pressure on this large cottage group daunts progress. Despite a good administration, and some material improvements, the housemothers in these crowded cottages rarely achieve a high standard of care. It was thought that stronger support was needed, particularly for the less experienced housemothers, in order to alleviate the strain of long hours of duty and demanding children. The introduction of a training group is welcome, but the sudden transition from this to full responsibility has overwhelmed some of the students.

There are, however, some good features. An easing of numbers, or strengthening of staff, could enable it to offer a very useful service, especially in the care of large families and in the provision for older children.²⁰

The Superintending Inspector noted that, "a discussion of strengths and weaknesses took place at County Hall on 4th May 1964." He concluded his note "no official action is suggested."

The following year, 1965, saw two inspections of Shirley Oaks. On 5 and 6 April 1965, inspectors went to visit the new head of the complex, described as 'the Superintendent.'²¹ Commenting on their report, the Superintending Inspector of HOCD wrote that:

Pressure for places continues to be acute, and there is some danger that new accommodation, which was intended to relieve overcrowding in existing

¹⁹ 'Correspondence with the Home Office and Organisation of the Children's Department,' 7 February 1949. TNA MH109/42.

²⁰ Note of Superintending Inspector for London Region (Central), 11 June 1964, following a report of a visit to Shirley Oaks, visited 20 to 28 April 1964, report of 10 June 1964. TNA BN62/2465.

²¹ Report of a visit to Shirley Oaks, visited 5 and 6 April 1965, report of 6 May 1965. TNA BN62/2466.