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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

10 April, 1984

I enclose an exchange of correspondence between the Headmaster of the Oporto British School and this office. I should be grateful if account of his letter could be taken in the briefing for the visit.

A. J. COLES

R. Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

DSC

le. PM Tones:
Portugal April
84



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

10 April, 1984

The Prime Minister was most grateful for your letter of 6 April about the Oporto British School. I expect you will have heard by now that she does indeed hope to visit you during her stay in Portugal and is looking forward to opening your new building. The information in your letter is of great assistance.

A. L. COLES

M. Scott, Esq.

DS

cc. PTT TOURS: Portugal, April 84

John Coles

INSTITUTO CULTURAL BRITANICO DO PORTO
Oporto British School

TEL. 680092

RUA DA CERCA, 326
4100 PORTO

2014



6th April 1984

Dear Mrs Thatcher,

It was with enormous delight that I learned from my Board of Governors of the possibility that you may be honouring us here at the Oporto British School with a visit during your stay in Portugal as a guest of the Portuguese Government this month.

Whereas I understand that the plans have not been officially verified, I thought I would write in anticipation that you might do us the great honour of officially opening our new school building which was completed in the Summer of last year. It would give us all, staff and children alike, immense pleasure to see you here and we can only hope and pray that those in official circles who make decisions will give it their blessing.

Should they do so, I thought that perhaps you would like to know something about the school beforehand. The school was founded in 1894 for the benefit of the British children here in Porto whose families were mainly connected with the Port wine business. For a long time only British children were educated here, but in recent years the school has expanded considerably to include Portuguese and other nationals. The Portuguese children constitute 52% of our present school population of 207 pupils, British or English speaking 20% and the remainder comprises of children from Asian, American and other European origins.

All our teaching is done in English by well qualified staff - some recruited from Britain, others recruited locally. We base our teaching on the curriculum laid down by the HMC, IAPS and GSA Joint Standing Committee. All our children, whatever nationality, have to sit the Common Entrance Examination between the ages of 13 and 14 years. Some children leave us at that stage to enter a British Public school, or may remain with us to study for a further two years for their 'O' Level Examinations. Recently the Portuguese Ministry of Education granted the school 'Equivalence Status' with the Portuguese educational system, which means that any Portuguese child may transfer to a Portuguese school at any stage without having to sit a special examination. We have found that such children who have transferred in this way have discovered that they are well ahead of their peers in the Portuguese schools.

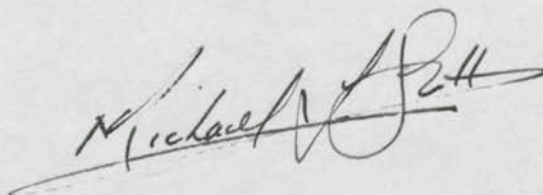
Being a British School in a foreign country we encounter problems which do not exist in most independent schools in Britain - namely with the relatively high percentage of foreign nationals, the problem of English language speaking and understanding prevents some pupils from making the progress they might otherwise make. However, we are attempting to overcome this difficulty by insisting that children who are not English speaking can only enter the school at the age of 3 years, and for those who are encountering difficulty language-wise higher up the school have the benefit of a recently employed Remedial teacher from Britain who has had particular training in this field.

All our children are day-pupils, so we enjoy close contact with the majority of our parents, to many of whom paying fees for their children's education is a novelty. With Portugal going through a fairly tough economic time at present, it puts some considerable strain on their pockets, although our fees are very low by British standards. Since we do not have any help from either the British or Portuguese government, there is the problem of not being able to offer commensurate salaries with those in Britain, thereby making it increasingly hard to recruit the best staff from Britain. At the moment I am extremely fortunate in having an excellent staff recruited, in the main, from local sources. Unfortunately this is not a situation upon which one can depend indefinitely.

I hope you will find this brief run-down of our school of interest prior to your visit to Portugal. We hope very much indeed that allowance will be made in your programme to visit us. The pleasure it would generate would be incalculable. If there is any other information you would care to have about us, I am sure that your recently appointed Press Officer, Mr Ian Murray would be able to help. He was on our Board of Governors when he was British Consul here last year, - a good personal friend.

We look forward to your visit to Porto with great anticipation and await with hope to hear if you are able to see our school. At the very least my wife and I will have the pleasure of meeting you at a Reception at the Factory House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michael J. P. H.", written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.