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Mr Charles Powell
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
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Dear Charles

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION

As requested, I attach briefing on the Holgate School in Nottingham, which is going to link with the Lord Byron School in Leninakan.

We still know very little about the staffing and curriculum of the Byron School, but John Wiggins, who will be attending the opening ceremony, will aim to find out more while he is there. He will also be taking with him a package of information about the Holgate School (including its prospectuses); and material on exchanges which we hope will be of use to the Armenians.

Yours sincerely

John

JOHN RATCLIFF
Assistant Private
Secretary

THE HOLGATE SCHOOL, HUCKNALL, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

The Holgate School is a comprehensive for 11 - 18 year old pupils in Hucknall, Notts. Its roll is around 1,800, though its sixth form is small (ca 100 pupils). Right next to the school is the churchyard where Lord Byron's heart is buried.

The school does not have any experience of links or pupil exchanges, but it has sent and received exchange teachers.

Neither does it teach Russian. However, even before linking up with the Lord Byron School in Armenia, it was interested in the Soviet Union, and plans are being made for a group of pupils (about 15 of them) to visit Leningrad in 1991.

The acting Headmaster, Richard Robinson, attended the reception and the dinner that the Secretary of State for Education and Science hosted for his Soviet counterpart, Professor Yagodin, when he visited Britain in April. Announcement was made then of the link between Holgate and the Lord Byron School.

DEVELOPING THE LINK

Although the Lord Byron School is scheduled to open its doors to its pupils in September, we do not yet know whether the Head and any staff have been appointed. However, this may become clearer after the opening ceremony in June. Once we have a contact, we hope to get information about the Byron School's proposed curriculum etc.

Our plan is to encourage a link based on joint curriculum work and involving a wide range of pupils. This could be a problem given the likely communication difficulties.

A possible timetable for establishing contacts might be as follows:

Financial year 1990/91: - a study visit to Leninakan by a Holgate teacher to pave the way for a teacher exchange.

Financial year 1991/92: - the purpose of the teacher exchange would be to plan a joint curriculum project (or a range of joint curriculum projects) which would in turn pave the way for a pupil exchange (perhaps to evaluate the joint curriculum project/s) in 1992/93.

Financial year 1992/93: - first pupil exchanges.

The Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges is already providing advice and guidance to the Holgate School on good exchange practice and how to make the best of a partner school.

It is hoped that modest resources will be made available to the Central Bureau by the DES to enable the exchanges to take place alongside the agreed school exchange programme initiated in 1988 by the then Secretary of State for Education and Science.