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PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

May 2010, 4 Via della Conciliazione, The Vatican, Rome

MESSAGE TO BUDDHISTS FOR THE FEAST OF VESAKH 2011

Seeking Truth in Freedom: Christians and Buddhists Live in Peace

Dear Buddhist Friends,

1. On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, I am happy once again to offer heartfelt good wishes to all of you on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti. I pray that this annual feast may bring serenity and joy to Buddhists throughout the world.
2. In the light of an exchange of mutual friendship, as in the past, I would like to share with you some of our convictions in the hope of strengthening relations between our communities. My thoughts turn first to the relationship between peace, truth and freedom. In the pursuit of authentic peace, a commitment to seek truth is a necessary condition. All persons have a natural duty to seek truth, to follow it and freely to live their lives in accordance with it (Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 1). This human striving for truth offers a fruitful opportunity for the followers of the different religions to encounter one another in depth and to grow in appreciation of the gifts of each.
3. In today's world, marked by forms of secularism and fundamentalism that are often inimical to true freedom and spiritual values, interreligious dialogue can be the alternative choice by which we find the "golden way" to live in peace and work together for the good of all. As Pope Benedict XVI has said, "for the Church, dialogue between the followers of the different religions represents an important means of cooperating with all religious communities for the common good" (Message for the World Day of Peace 2011, no. 11). Such dialogue is also a powerful stimulus to respect the fundamental human rights of freedom of conscience and freedom of worship. Wherever religious freedom is effectively acknowledged, the dignity of the human person is respected at its root; by the sincere search for what is true and good, moral conscience and civil institutions are strengthened; and justice and peace are firmly established (Cf. *ibid.*, no. 5).
4. Dear Buddhist friends, we pray that your celebration of Vesakh will be a source of spiritual enrichment and an occasion to take up anew the quest of truth and goodness, to show compassion to all who suffer, and to strive to live together in harmony. Once again allow us to express our cordial greetings and to wish all of you a Happy Buddha Day.

Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran
President
Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata
Secretary

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## Foreign Secretary's Vesak Day message

Department: Foreign Office  
Published: 2011-05-17 13:04:34



Foreign Secretary William Hague sends his best wishes for Vesak to the global Buddhist community.

This government news item was published on the Foreign Office website on the 17 May 2011.

Foreign Secretary's Vesak Day message

Foreign Secretary William Hague sends his best wishes for Vesak to the global Buddhist community. He said:

*"I am delighted to send my best wishes to the Buddhist community in Britain and around the world celebrating Vesak today.*

*"The Buddha's teachings of dignity and respect for all have important relevance in today's world, especially at a time when so many are seeking increased political rights and freedom.*

*"On the occasion of the 2600th anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment, I wish you and your family a happy and blessed Vesak."*

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?id=596949082&view=News>

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Religious Education Council on Government policies around RE

May 2011 : http://www.nasacre.org.uk/downloads/REC_HW_May_11.pdf

[full article](#)

Extract :

Since the start of the state funded educational system in 1870, every major Education Act has become protracted in its passage through Parliament because of issues relating to Religious Education.

1870 Forster Education Bill
1902 Balfour Education Bill
1944 Education Act
1988 Education Reform Act.

This is in part because Religion has been and remains a contentious aspect in the history of the UK – and indeed across the world. It is also because there has been a recognition on the part of members of all political parties and both Houses that good religious education is an important key to the health of our national democracy.

1870 respective fears of churches and secularists regarding ownership
1902 sensitivity regarding inter denominational squabbling
1944 consciousness of dangers from Nazism and pseudo-religious ideologies
1988 need to acknowledge the strengths of Christianity & the other principal religions.

The end result is an RE tradition which is, internationally, widely admired:

- **Flexible framework** as formulated in '88 Act and elaborated in 2004 non-statutory *National Framework for RE* co-signed by faith community leaders in 2006.
- **'Big society' SACREs** covering every local area - reference and support groups comprising teachers and scholars, politicians and faith community representatives
- **Complementarity** between RE in public educational provision and that within parental faith communities.

Unfortunately, there are substantial weaknesses as identified in successive research and inspection reports, as now summarised and cited in the appended extracts.

It is these weaknesses which the RE Council and its member organisations see as likely to be unintentionally exacerbated by some elements within the government's Education policy.

[full article](#)

Topics covered :

WHY ANIMATION REGARDING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE EBACC IS THE TIP OF A DANGEROUS ICEBERG

RECENT RESEARCH AND INSPECTION REPORTS

SURVEY BY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SACREs and ASSOCIATION OF RE INSPECTORS, ADVISERS AND CONSULTANTS 2011

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF RE (NATRE) Survey of teachers: the impact of the EBac on RE in secondary schools

[full article](#)

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**Is Religious Education in schools about to become history ?**

June 2011

***An Appeal from Buddhist contacts involved in Education to lobby Government***

Dear Buddhist friends,

The Executive of the Network of Buddhist Organisations and The General Council of the Buddhist Society are extremely concerned for the future of Religious Education (RE) in schools in England, including Buddhism. We write to invite you urgently to email the Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Schools.

**If we don't take action it's likely that 50 years of Buddhism in RE will shortly peter out.**

Though RE remains a statutory subject on the secondary curriculum, the proposal not to include RE as a Humanities subject in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) undermines its status; as a result many secondary schools are already reducing RE provision. Despite huge protest from the RE and faith communities, Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Education) and Nick Gibb (Minister for Schools) continue to maintain there is no problem.

What is the Ebacc?

The English Baccalaureate is a qualification gained with five A\* to C grades in English, maths, a language, a science and one Humanities subject. The qualifying Humanities subjects are History and Geography, but not RE.

Since a final decision about the EBacc will be made in the next few weeks, it is vital that we Buddhists make our disquiet known and make an effective argument for why RE should be included in the EBacc as a Humanities subject.

**Here are some points you may like to make in your letter/email:**

1. (Rather than arguing for the continued teaching of Buddhism) point out the desirability of knowledge of all faiths being seen as a vital part of young people's education. (The cultural argument)
2. Only History and Geography are included as Humanities subjects so far. RE contributes to better knowledge of these subjects and motivates young people to find out more about them. (The cross- curricular argument)
3. After a decade in which numbers of pupils taking RE GCSE climbed steadily year after year, RE's omission from the EBacc is undermining its status as a GCSE subject. As a result many schools are already disbanding or reducing their RE departments, which undermines the teaching of RE further down the school. (The experiential argument)
4. In the International Baccalaureate an element of RE has for years been included in the Theory of Knowledge course. As of this year the importance of RE has been recognised by making World Religions a subject in its own right. (The academic argument)
5. RE makes a vital contribution to the Government's social integration policy. (The Social Good argument)

Please write to the two Ministers responsible for making this decision as soon as you can, and to the Prime Minister as well.

Their emails are:

Govem@parliament.uk

Gibbn@parliament.uk

Camerond@parliament.uk

Please make clear in what capacity you are writing: as a concerned individual or on behalf of a Buddhist group or organisation.

If you prefer to write a letter, use headed notepaper where available. The postal address is:

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

House of Commons

London SW1A 0AA

(Same address for all.)

With thanks for your co-operation.

### ***Some suggestions from Yann Lovelock (NBO)***

Dear Colleagues,

Should some of you like to see an example of a letter based on the guidance below, I am attaching a copy of what Jamie Cresswell has sent the Prime Minister on behalf of NBO.

I should point out that at earlier letter to Michael Gove on behalf of the Education Advisory Group was met with a standard form letter (an later example to a completely different organisation is copied below). May I suggest, therefore that you send your letters of concern to your MP, or the Prime Minister, or Deputy Prime Minister, and copy it to Gove and Gibb. Hopefully they may be more in a listening mode than the Education Ministers seem to be.

Best wishes,

Yann

### ***Modifiable Form letter***

Thank you for your email dated 14 June, addressed to the Secretary of State, about religious education (RE) and the English Baccalaureate. I hope you are able to appreciate the Secretary of State for Education receives a vast amount of correspondence and is unable to reply to each one personally. It is for this reason I have been asked to reply.

The Government agrees that it is important for all pupils to study RE because it recognises the many benefits that this can offer pupils. RE is a compulsory subject throughout a pupil's schooling and it will remain so. It is precisely because it is compulsory that the Government decided not to include RE as a humanities subject for the English Baccalaureate. One of the reasons for introducing the English Baccalaureate is to encourage wider take up of geography and history in addition to, rather than instead of,

compulsory subjects.

The Government is concerned that the number of pupils who currently receive a broad education in core academic subjects is far too small, particularly for pupils in disadvantaged areas. The Government wants to encourage more pupils to study these core subjects and to open up opportunities for all pupils to have a broad and rounded education.

The English Baccalaureate has been designed to give pupils the opportunity to study a core of academic subjects - English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences and a language. However, the Government does not want to restrict the choices or opportunities of pupils who wish to undertake wider study. The number of core subjects in the English Baccalaureate is small enough to allow time for study in other subjects, including RE. Where pupils choose to take other subjects at GCSE, including RE, the Government will continue to recognise their success through other measures in the performance tables.

I hope this reassures you that the Government's plans for the English Baccalaureate will neither affect the status of RE as an important subject, nor prevent any pupil who wishes to take RE as one of their GCSEs from doing so.

### ***Martha A.'s suggestion***

Dear Sirs,

(I am writing to you as a private individual and a Buddhist because I am)(We are writing to you as a Buddhist group/organisation because we are) extremely concerned for the future of Religious Education in schools in England, including Buddhism.

Though RE remains a statutory subject on the secondary curriculum, the proposal not to include RE as a Humanities subject in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) undermines its status; as a result many secondary schools are already reducing RE provision. Despite huge protest from the RE and faith communities the government continue to maintain there is no problem.

Here are some points to consider:

1. Culturally it is desirable to include knowledge of all faiths as a vital part of young people's education.
2. Only History and Geography are included as Humanities subjects so far. RE contributes to better knowledge of these subjects and motivates young people to find out more about them.
3. After a decade in which numbers of pupils taking RE GCSE climbed steadily year after year, the omission of RE from the EBacc is undermining its status as a GCSE subject. As a result many schools are already disbanding or reducing their RE departments, which undermines the teaching of RE further down the school.

4. In the International Baccalaureate an element of RE has for years been included in the Theory of Knowledge course. As of this year the importance of RE has been recognised by making World Religions a subject in its own right.

5. RE makes a vital contribution to the Government's social integration policy.

For these reasons I/we beg you to reconsider the proposals.

Yours faithfully

(Your name, organization if applicable, address and /or email)

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Religious Education : Winds of change by B. Gill, Chair of NASACRE

April 2011, at the Jewish representative Council of Greater Manchester

..
On 5 February 2011 PM David Cameron gave a speech in Munich which attracted much media attention. The speech, echoing views he had expressed three years earlier, encapsulated his response to the threat from terrorism.

..
There are many, including myself, who would disagree with the concept of multiculturalism portrayed in that speech and argue that it is a gross misrepresentation of both multiculturalism and antiracism.

..
Commentating on the speech Bob Jackson, Professor of Religious Education at Warwick University asks what this common culture is and what are its shared values? He concludes:

"We can deduce, from another part of Mr Cameron's speech, that these include universal human rights – including for women and people of other faiths; equality of all before the law; democracy and the right of people to elect their own government; and support for social integration rather than separatism. 'To belong here', says Mr Cameron, 'is to believe in these things'."

Mr Cameron's solution to this perceived problem is to ensure:

- 1. immigrants speak the language of the new home country*
- 2. people are educated in a common culture and curriculum*
- 3. people are encouraged to participate in society by shifting the balance of power away from the state to people.*

Jackson notes that:

".. the shift in the shift in understanding of 'multiculturalism' at the normative, political level put forward by Mr Cameron is now common",

and that it is espoused by people such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Ruth Kelly (when Secretary of State for DCLG in the Labour Government). Jackson points out that this, however, is politicians' construction of multiculturalism and that research reveals, "... a much more complex picture of the 'multicultural' nature of society and of cultural relations, with constantly changing, complex and heterogeneous cultural groupings, exhibiting much diversity and some tension over issues such as identity."

etc..

What is the effect on the teaching of RE ? [Full speech by Bruce Gill](#)

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## **IFN – An Update on Public Policy Issues**

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Yann Lovelock <yanda\_lovelock@yahoo.co.uk>

To: nboinformation@googlegroups.com

Sent: Thursday, 16 June 2011, 7:35

Subject: [NBO Information] Public policy update

Dear Colleagues,

Please find attached the Inter Faith Network's latest public policy update on matters that are of concern to faiths. It contains, as item 5.9, an item on the Red Tape Challenge on which Chris commented yesterday.

Best wishes,  
Yann

**[The IFN June 2011 summary note on Public Policy issues](#) covers the following :**

***You are invited to note this update, provided for information, on some public policy issues relevant to the work of the [Inter Faith Network](#)***

**The Government's approach to integration and engagement with faith communities**

**The Government's 'Big Society' agenda**

**The Government's 'Localism' Bill**

**Equalities and Human Rights issues**

**Census 2011**

**Review of Prevent Strategy**

**Freedom of Speech on campus**

**Charity Commission Updates**

**NCVO Task Force report launch**

***It is all here : [The IFN June 2011 summary note on Public Policy issues](#)***

**A copy of the original report can be found online at:**

**[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/unshackling-good-neighbours](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/unshackling-good-neighbours)**

Also you might want to look at :

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/red-tape-task-force-calls-for-clearer-legal-protection-for-volunteers.pdf>

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/unshackling-good-neighbours.pdf>

More from IFN on the subject, jan 2011 : <http://www.bhamfaiths.org.uk/docs/IFN%20Public%20Policy%20issues%20Feb%202011.pdf> or [here](#)

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Michael Gove : The moral purpose of school reform

Department of Education :

Michael Gove's speech to the National College of School Leadership, Birmingham, 16 June 2011.

Transcript of the speech

More related speeches can be found here :

<http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches>

Religious education resources from the Department for Education :

<http://www.education.gov.uk/search/results?q=religious+education>

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