

Britain: Headteacher, who runs a Church of England school, mocked on Twitter for claiming evolution is not a fact

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Richard Dawkins weighs in on social media debate after Christina Wilkinson said there was 'more evidence that Bible is true'

A primary school headteacher has been mocked on Twitter after claiming that evolution was “a theory” and there was “more evidence that the Bible is true”.

Christina Wilkinson, of St Andrew's Church of England school in Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire, made the remarks in a tweet responding to London headteacher Tom Sherrington, who urged teachers to stick to science when teaching the origins of life [\[1\]](#).

Wilkinson wrote: “Evolution is not a fact. That's why it's called a theory! There's more evidence that the Bible is true.”

Amid criticism and calls for her to resign on Twitter, Wilkinson issued a statement saying: “I'd like to make it clear that we teach the full national curriculum in school and that our pupils receive a fully rounded education.”

She also said her tweet was sent from a personal account and “represents my own views”. However, her Twitter handle was @WilkinsonHead, apparently referencing her role as headteacher. The tweet has since been taken down and the account closed.

Wilkinson's assertion was met with scorn on the social media site. One person suggested she retrain as a vicar, while another said: “That's an unacceptable level of stupidity from a headteacher.”

Liv Boeree tweeted: “This is horrifying. I'm still holding out hope her response is some kind of performance art. Pls pls pls tell me this lady doesn't work in education. Please.”

Sherrington wrote: “Sigh. I sincerely hope your students aren't told that. Take them to a natural history museum.”

His original posts, which sparked the exchange, had read: “For me, it is critical that teachers do not water down the science to accommodate religious perspectives if that means sacrificing the acceptance of evidence.

“This applies to science and RE teachers. New Earth creationism and more subtle variants of Intelligent Design are a denial of science and I think all teachers need to be conscious of that.”

The evolutionary biologist Prof Richard Dawkins said Wilkinson was misusing the word theory.

"Scientists call evolution a theory only in a special scientists' sense, which is NOT the same as the layman's 'tentative hypothesis'," he said.

"This is so often misunderstood that I now recommend abandoning the confusing word 'theory' altogether for the case of evolution. Evolution is a fact, as securely attested as any fact in science. 'We are cousins of monkeys and kangaroos' can be asserted with as much confidence as 'Our planet orbits the sun'."

The government banned the teaching of creationism in science classes in UK schools 18 months ago [2]. It said funding would be withdrawn from any free school that taught theories that run "contrary to established scientific and/or historical evidence and explanations".

Ken Moss, a local councillor with responsibility for education, told the MailOnline [3]: "I don't think we should be promoting any religious text as more scientifically accurate than hundreds of years of detailed study."

He added: "There is plenty of room for religious teaching, but I do not think that should be above science fact. The role of a school and a headteacher is to inform the pupils of the facts and not to just promote religious texts."

Graham Jones, Labour MP for Hyndburn, whose constituency includes Wilkinson's school, said: "It's a Church of England school and it will, of course, teach the Bible. But it should also teach the children about other religions and beliefs."

"The national curriculum requires a more broad-based perception of evolution and a balance of opinions has to be struck so pupils can make up their own minds."

A spokesman for Blackburn diocesan board of education said: "As a diocese we state all schools should teach the full national curriculum, which includes 'adaptation of plants and animals and that adaptation may lead to evolution'."

Harriet Sherwood, The Guardian. Religion correspondent

P.S.

* "Headteacher mocked on Twitter for claiming evolution is not a fact". The Guardian. Wednesday 3 February 2016 10.33 GMT. Last modified on Wednesday 3 February 2016 22.00 GMT:
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/03/headteacher-mocked-twitter-claim-evolution-not-fact>

Footnotes

[1] <https://twitter.com/GSpellchecker/status/692050996789407744>

[2] See on ESSF (article 37429), [Britain & faith schools: Richard Dawkins celebrates a victory over creationists](#).

[3] <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3428056/Church-England-primary-school-headteacher-sparks-online-ridicule-claiming-evolution-theory-evidence-Bible->

[true.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490](#)