

Salt and Light Papers provide important information and analysis to help Christians and Churches to engage with 21st century social issues

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EVOLUTION BECOMES COMPULSORY

Evolution is to be included in the primary curriculum for the first time, the Department for Education (DfE) announced on 14 June. In its [draft primary National Curriculum for science](#), the DfE includes the teaching of evolution from year four (age 8-9).

Currently, evolution is first taught from year 10 (age 14-15), but biologists and educational experts had argued that the topic is so central to biology that it should be taught from an earlier age.

The programmes of study announced in the draft curriculum include modules in years four and five on 'Evolution and inheritance'. In year four, pupils will explore 'how characteristics are passed from one generation to another', and 'explain how the human skeleton has changed over time, since we separated from other primates'. In year six, pupils will 'be introduced to the fossil as evidence for evolution' and 'how animals and plants are suited to and adapt to their environment in different ways; and how this leads to evolution.'

In the proposed new science curriculum, pupils will learn about the life of Charles Darwin and David Attenborough, alongside other key scientific figures such as William Harvey and Sir Isaac Newton.

It will be interesting to see how the syllabus deals with William Harvey (1578-1657), a Christian believer whose vital physiological discoveries were greatly influenced by his Bible understanding and heavily illustrated by Bible references. Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood in part by asking why God put so many valves in the veins and none in the arteries. In lecturing on the heart and pericardium, he referred to the Apostle John's account of Christ's crucifixion. In writing on parturition, Harvey mentioned the pregnancy of Mary, Jesus' mother; but he does not say 'Jesus.' Instead, he intoned 'our Saviour Christ, of men most perfect.' In making a scientific point about the beginning of life, Harvey quoted from Leviticus 17:11 and 14.

The publication of the draft curriculum has not been without its controversy. Two of the panel of four expert national curriculum advisers tendered their resignations over deep concerns that

thousands of 'stakeholder' consultation responses had appeared 'to be treated lightly,' whereas 'significant influence' had been exercised by schools minister Nick Gibb.

The published draft curriculum also includes programme studies for English and Maths and also provides for foreign languages to become compulsory from the age of seven.

Peter Fearnley

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Salt and Light Papers is a series of occasional papers on contemporary issues of social concern. It is published online by the Affinity Social Issues Team. Its purpose is to help Christians to think through questions of relevance to our place in the world around us. The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily endorsed by the Affinity Social Issues Team.

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