

Teaching of Creationism / Intelligent Design in schools: RAS statement

The Royal Astronomical Society supports the teaching of evolution, geophysics, astronomy and other scientific theories in school science lessons. These disciplines share the characteristic of being subject to modification and sometimes outright falsification as new facts and theories come to light through the results of observation, interpretation and experiment.

Based on over a century of scientific work, incorporating a wide range of evidence from many intertwining branches of science, such as astronomy, geophysics and physics, the universe is many billions of years old (the current best estimate is about 13.7 billion years old) and the age of the Earth is about a third of that (about 4.5 billion years old). These figures are both consistent with each other and consistent with biological sciences, like evolution.

It is not for the Society to comment on the teaching of religious ideas in schools. However, we believe that Intelligent Design and Creationism are not scientific theories and are presented with too little regard to carefully developed and tested scientific evidence, in order to support a preconceived view. This view encompasses the central ideas of these belief systems that the Earth and universe are no more than a few thousand years old and that creatures on Earth were created as they are now at a particular time in the past, not long ago. These ideas directly contradict scientific evidence and are so far from accepted scientific knowledge that they are regarded by scientists as false.

Intelligent Design and creationism are not science and should not become a mandatory or optional part of the science curriculum in schools in the UK.