



THE CAREY FEDERATION



Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Dear Families and Stakeholders,

**Re: Consultation on proposed federation of St Giles-on-the-Heath Primary School and Ashwater Primary School & Halwill Primary School (The Carey Federation).**

Small, rural, village schools are the bedrock of the local community and provide a nurturing, family environment for children to play and learn; to grow to be caring and capable young people.

However, working as a small village school in isolation has many challenges. The lack of capacity in leadership and financial pressures can limit the opportunities for the children as well as the professional development for the staff.

To retain the individuality of each school and its vital place within its village, the school governors believe that we need to work within a small group of Local Authority maintained schools, geographically close to each other and similar in size, ethos and community demographic.

Halwill and Ashwater Schools have been federated as The Carey Federation for 10 years. In this time the two schools have retained their own individuality and sense of community whilst the behind-the-scenes capacity in leadership and administration have enabled both schools to develop high quality teachers and teaching assistants resulting in strong outcomes for the children. Working together has also facilitated children from both schools being able to attend an increased number of trips and take part in many activities that would not be sustainable were the schools to be working on their own. The Carey Federation governors have seen the benefits of working as 2 schools and believe that working as 3 schools, will extend these opportunities for children and staff further.

St Giles-on-the-Heath is a good school with capable staff. However, the St Giles' governors recognise that working independently has its limitations. The proposal to federate with Halwill and Ashwater Schools will strengthen leadership of St Giles, enable the St Giles' staff to develop further both by taking advantage of expertise within Halwill and Ashwater Schools but also allow the St Giles' staff the opportunities to share their own knowledge of subject specialisms with staff from Halwill and Ashwater, thus creating a strong talent pool between the three schools. This ultimately means that the children from all three schools will benefit from a skilled staff who recognise the value of continuous professional development and are able to access wider training.

A federation is a family of schools, with each school retaining its unique character, performance tables and having a separate Ofsted inspection. The current admissions processes will remain the same. The schools within the federation will share one governing board made up from representatives from all three schools.

Federated schools continue to be Local Authority Schools; each school keeps its own legal status but works collaboratively under shared leadership. A Federation is not the same as a Multi Academy Trust (MAT), which is a single legal entity where one organisation runs several schools and is not part of the Local Authority.

St Giles has worked collaboratively with The Carey Federation (Halwill and Ashwater Primary Schools) for many years and took the decision to form a management partnership in March 2025. Both St Giles and The Carey Federation governors have monitored the success of this partnership and are now proposing to make the arrangement a permanent one by moving into a formal federation whereby all schools will continue to share the executive leadership of Mrs Ruh Alford.

We are proposing to federate to ensure continuing strong leadership and high standards in teaching and learning whilst maintaining each school's individual ethos and values.

### **What will the benefits be for our schools?**

- Increasing opportunities for the children to mix with a wider group both academically and socially;
- Provide the children with even wider opportunities to prepare them for a more secure transition process to secondary school
- Enable children to attend a small rural school and benefit from an idyllic village schooling whilst being outward looking and ready for life in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain
- Greater access to a wider range of resources (human and physical), and opportunities to make savings through economies of scale to reinvest in children's learning e.g. sharing resources such as transport for trips thereby reducing costs and the ability to negotiate with providers;
- Sharing strong and proven leadership;
- Sharing teaching expertise;
- Availability of teaching resources;
- Joint planning and curriculum development opportunities for staff;
- Joint training of staff to impact positively on children's learning;

### **How will this work?**

There will be an Executive leadership team across the three schools, with an Executive Headteacher and two Executive Deputy Headteachers working across the three schools. This leadership team will focus their combined energies on teaching, learning and standards as well as inclusion, pupil wellbeing and personal development in each of the schools.

The federation will have one governing board composed of representatives from each school community. The make-up of the governing board has to adhere to the 2012 Constitution Federation Regulations, as amended in 2016.

The membership of this single governing board includes representation for parents and staff, co-opted governors and a local authority governor. Together this group of people will take overall responsibility for the three schools within the federation. The proposed size of the federated governing body would be 14 this would include:

2 Parent governors

2 Staff governors (including the Executive Headteacher)

1 Local Authority appointed governor

9 Co-opted governors

The Governing Boards are proposing that the federation start date would be **20<sup>th</sup> April 2026**, at the start of the summer term.

## **There is a Federation Consultation Process**

The Governors of both St Giles-on-the-Heath School and Halwill and Ashwater Schools have set up a consultation process to seek the views of parents, staff, the community, the local authority and other key partners. The consultation process will last for 6 school weeks, starting from **9<sup>th</sup> February 2026**. Governors would welcome your views and comments and invite you to attend one or more of the following meetings:

- Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2026 at 5:00 at St Giles-on-the-Heath Primary School
- Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at 3:45 pm at Halwill Primary School
- Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February at 3:45 pm at Ashwater Primary School.

If you are unable to attend any of the above meetings and would like to discuss federation with your Chair of Governors please contact your school to make an appointment in the usual manner.

Written responses should be addressed to 'The Chair of Governors' of your school and must be received by **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March, 3:30 pm**. A box for written responses will be provided in each school. You can also share your comments via email to either:

[consultation@st-giles-heath-primary.devon.sch.uk](mailto:consultation@st-giles-heath-primary.devon.sch.uk)

or

[consultation@halwill.devon.sch.uk](mailto:consultation@halwill.devon.sch.uk)

It is the Governors who will make the final decision, drawing upon a broad evidence base including the views of parents and staff. Each governing board from each school considering federation takes its own decision. As with any governing board decision this is a simple majority taken at a meeting of the full governing board.

We look forward to hearing from you and will, of course, keep you fully informed regarding our final decision, which will be made at the close of the consultation period at the end of March 2026. We aim to write to you by **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2026**.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Coombs & Kathy Williams  
Co-Chair of Governors  
St Giles on the Heath Primary School

John Lawlor  
Chair of Governors  
The Carey Federation