

Church of England anticipates big expansion of its schools nationwide

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The *Church Times* has reported this week that there is to be a large-scale expansion of Church of England schools across the country to accommodate the rising demand for school places.

The paper says the Government expects to provide half a million new places nationally by 2021, with about 100,000 needed over the next year.

The head of schools policy at the Church's Board of Education, the Revd Nigel Genders, said: "The Church of England provides around one quarter of all schools nationally and we want to play our part in solving the places crisis".

The Church of England claims that because ministers want to concentrate new places in schools already graded as "outstanding" or "good", church schools are likely to be targeted for expansion because most fit this criterion.

The Church is also calling for the Government to give them money for expansion directly rather than channelling it through local authorities.

Meanwhile, when asked in Parliament about the Church's role in education, the Education Secretary, Michael Gove, said: "We praise and cherish the role of the Church of England in making sure children have an outstanding education. I welcome the [Chadwick report on church schools of the future] and look forward to working with Bishop John Pritchard to extend the role of the Church in school provision".

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