**Frequently Asked Questions – DfE Energy for schools service**

**Are you considering joining the DfE Energy for schools service?**

The DfE is launching a new Energy for schools service. Based on user research with schools, this service will see DfE assume contractual responsibility for schools’ energy supply.

1. **How does the DfE Energy for schools service work?**

* The DfE Energy for schools service operates through two main energy suppliers:
* EDF provides electricity
* TotalEnergies provides gas
* DfE manages these contracts on behalf of schools through the Crown
* Commercial Service (CCS) Energy Framework (RM6251). This means:

1. Schools don't need to handle complex energy contracts themselves
2. Schools have a single point of contact through DfE for any energy-related queries
3. Schools benefit from the bulk purchasing power of a government-wide contract

* The service simplifies energy management for schools by providing them with direct support from DfE, rather than having to deal with energy suppliers or commercial frameworks themselves.

DfE is the contracting authority with EDF (electricity) and TotalEnergies Energies (gas) via the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) Supply of Energy Framework (RM6251). DfE will be the main point of contact for Schools.

1. **Why should our school consider using the DfE Energy for schools service?**

The DfE Energy for Schools service offers your school a simpler, safer way to manage your energy needs. We protect you from market volatility and high prices while removing the risks associated with unregulated energy brokers.

DfE will handle all the contractual responsibilities and administrative paperwork with energy suppliers, freeing up your valuable time to focus on education. We'll support you through every step of the onboarding process, making the transition smooth and straightforward.

Our benchmarking shows that schools typically save around 36% on their energy costs through our service. This means you can secure both peace of mind and significant cost savings for your school.

1. **Why has DfE partnered with CCS?**

CCS is the UK's largest non-utility energy buyer, trading in wholesale markets since 1998. Their expert team manages energy procurement for Central Government, consistently outperforming the market by 12% over seven years through their V30 basket approach.

1. **How do I find out more about the DfE Energy for school service?**

The DfE are running regular scheduled webinars. [Details can be found on the GOV.UK Buying for schools](https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/free-dfe-webinars-for-schools-spring-2025-3907993?just_published=true)

1. **Can I register my interest for the DfE Energy for school’s service before my current contract expires?**

Yes. Depending on when your current contract expires, you would go onto an interim rate contract until the next available opportunity to join the V30 basket which always commences on the 1st of April, each year.

If your school wishes to join the DfE contract, we will help you complete the onboarding process promptly. This may require joining a short-term interim contract until the next V30 contract period begins in April.

1. **What is the V30 basket?**
   1. The V30 basket is a variable rate contract,. For this basket CCS trades over a 42-month purchase window which begins 30 months before delivery and continues throughout the 12-month delivery period.
   2. More detail on the V30 basket is explained in more detail here: [Access Webinar - Introduction to CCS](https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/webinar/confirmation/47666/introduction-to-ccs-energy) Energy - CCS (crowncommercial.gov.uk)
   3. Details of the trading strategies, purchasing period and windows can be found in the trading strategies document in the Other Information section below.
2. **What is an interim rate?**

An interim rate contract is a temporary arrangement that bridges the gap until you can join the V30 basket.

Here's what you need to know:

• It's a hassle-free solution - we'll automatically move you into the V30 basket when your interim contract ends

• You'll still benefit from all framework protections, including procurement compliance, social value commitments and data security measures

• Rates are available on request but may vary due to market conditions.

1. **Do I need to terminate my existing contract?**

Check your contract's termination terms and notice period. Take any necessary action directly with your provider. The DfE cannot undertake this for you.

Wait for your current provider to confirm termination before we can proceed with the transfer.

1. **What are the current interim rates?**

If you want to know about Interim Rates email; [energy.schools@education.gov.uk](mailto:energy.schools@education.gov.uk)

1. **Can I transfer to the DfE Energy for schools service if my current contract is already with CCS?**

If a school’s energy contract is already with CCS, then we will be able to novate you onto the DfE account (V30 basket) without the need to give notice to your current provider.

There are strict deadlines depending on which CCS basket you are currently in, therefore please contact the [Schools Energy Team](mailto:energy.schools@education.gov.uk) for further information.

1. **What is the energy market outlook?**

Energy prices remain volatile despite falling from crisis peaks. The DfE Energy for schools service will continue monitoring market prices through CCS and request updated rates when appropriate.

1. **How do I sign up for the DfE Energy for schools service?**

The first step is to contact the Energy for Schools team to express your interest. The team holds regular Introductory Webinars where you can find more information about the service and the steps you would need to take to join.

[Details can be found on the GOV.UK Buying for schools](https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/free-dfe-webinars-for-schools-spring-2025-3907993?just_published=true)

1. **Is there a management fee for the DfE Energy for schools service?**

No, this service is free to access and use.

1. **What information will I need to provide DfE to join the Energy for schools Service?**

You will need to provide the following information which you will find on your current bills.

* School Name
* Supply Address
* Main Contact
* Gas MPRN
* Electricity MPAN
* Gas contract expiry date
* Electricity contract expiry date

1. **What is the process to join?**

These are the steps to complete to join

* + DfE Energy for school webinar
  + Offer of one-to-one Team session if required
  + Issue of Letter or Authority issued to school
  + Return of LOA from school to DfE
  + Issue of standard template documents for schools to review and update
  + DfE to issue template documents to Energy suppliers
  + DfE Account Managers to liaise with School and Energy provider to complete the Onboarding Process

1. **Can I join if I receive my energy through the Local Authority?**

Yes, but you must get approval from your Local Authority first and check your contract's termination terms. Make sure to follow any required notice period.

1. **How is the Energy Aggregation scheme compliant with public sector buying regulations?**

The CCS framework comply with Public Contracts Regulation 2015 in place at the time the framework was established and therefore procurement compliant. As such they simplify the buying process for schools as schools buying through a CCS framework will have complied with [DfE’s Buying Procedures and Procurement Law for Schools](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-procedures-and-procurement-law-for-schools)

1. **How does the DfE buy its energy?**

DfE are mandated by HM Treasury to take advantage of CCS energy frameworks for gas and electricity. All central government departments use the CCS V30 basket to compliantly procure their energy supply.

1. **Do you have any information as to how the V30 compares to a fixed rate contract?**

The V30 price can go up and down, but it changes more smoothly than other options because it's based on trading over a longer time. This has worked well recently because energy prices have been unpredictable.

While V30 is generally more stable, it might not always give you the lowest price. The gas price can change as you go along, and for electricity, the price gets adjusted each month.

1. **Is DfE able to offer a benchmarking service to assess value for money?**

The DfE Energy for schools service can complete a benchmarking exercise which will provide you with a breakdown of savings you could have had. We’d ask you to submit some information to us to benchmark your current costs and then review with the brokers. The DfE do not charge 3rd party administrative fees, nor profit from onboarding your schools, whereas the broker will benefit financially. Is that something you would like us to complete for you?

The DfE Energy for Schools service will undertake a benchmark on your behalf: We would need:

1. Meter number(s)
2. Total annual consumption for each respective meter (if more than one
3. Total annual cost/spend per meter (separated if more than one meter)

The benchmarking comparison will be based on what the school invoice prices are compared to the current CCS, V30 energy basket prices and benchmarks against the fully delivered cost

Where there are multiple schools within a MAT we will ask you to select 2 representative schools within your trust be used for the benchmarking purposes.

If the request for Benchmarking is received, advise the Trust/Schools they need to send the below to [DFE-Energy.SERVICES-TEAM@Education.gov.uk](mailto:DFE-Energy.SERVICES-TEAM@Education.gov.uk).

The email then needs forwarded to DfE ([energy.schools@education.gov.uk](mailto:energy.schools@education.gov.uk)) then DfE will send back to us to then go back to school.

1. **What happens if my contract start date is outside of CCS basket renewals?**

If you are out of contract and need something to be put in place immediately, you will receive interim rates. Interim rates are a reflection of the current energy market.

You should receive your interim prices for electricity within six weeks of completing your documentation to join the DfE Energy for schools service.

For gas you should receive interim prices up to 30 days prior you're the contract start date.

Prices for the interim contract differ to the V30 basket which is a longer-term contract.

1. **What if my current contract is not due to expire before the start of the next available V30 basket?**

If your current contract does not expire until after the earliest April start date for the next V30 basket, you would still be able to join the DfE Energy for schools service but would go onto an interim rate until the next available V30 April start date, after which you would automatically transition over to the V30 basket.

1. **What is the contract term?**

This is an ongoing contract referred to as an evergreen contract, and your school/trust will remain on the DfE contract, until such time as you give notice to exit (30 months’ notice required).

1. **Can I join if I receive my energy through my trust?**

Yes, we can contact your trust to discuss this for your school.

1. **I’m a PFI school, can I still join?**

Unfortunately, we cannot benchmark PFI schools, nor act on your behalf as a Contracting Authority.

We would request that you ask your local authority if they pay them for energy and seek their guidance.

Unfortunately, the DfE are unable to help PFI schools until  such their time their PFI contract is due to expire.

1. **Can I request my contract or to see a contract template?**

The important contractual document will be the LOA document.

1. **What if my school is currently in an energy contract?**

Thank you for your informative response, if you are content, I will keep you contact details on record and contact you closer to the expire date and in the meantime you can contact the Dept at any point for support and guidance.

1. **Are Solar panels included in the v30?**

* Schools can access EDF export offer but not through the DfE’s specific service offer.
* EDF have an SEG (smart export guarantee) licensee and so offer export tariffs. This will be facilitated separately through the V30 CCS energy framework, but customers can join at any point through their own facilitation aka as own entity.
* Customers can enter the SEG agreement without changing their (supply) import electricity to EDF and can still take up the SEG agreement at the rate of 3.0p per kWh.
* Under the SEG agreement customers will get separate invoices for their export values.
* The  ‘EDF Export Variable Value available (for existing customers at 5.6p per kWh) and under the SEG agreement these are set values, however any customer who exports over 1,000MWh per annum can enter a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)arrangement where there is more flexibility. We are looking at whether we may want to enter a PPA in the future as these are long term commitments. If you would like any further advice, please get in touch.
* There are no time constraints associated with joining the SEG, customers can join the SEG at any point.
* Customers can download HH data if available from the portal but not the invoicing, its set up directly by the export team.

**Section 2. After I have joined.**

1. **Who will be responsible for paying bills?**

Schools will be billed directly and responsible for paying their bills as now.

You decide your billing preferences during onboarding, i.e. whether you want to be invoiced at school or trust level and the method of payment.

1. **What support can I expect from the DfE account management team?**

The DfE Energy Team will provide comprehensive support across various aspects of your energy management. They can assist with:

• Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) queries - Help with interpreting and implementing the agreement terms

• Contract management - Support with contract-related questions, including guidance on termination notice periods and contractual obligations

• Site administration - Assistance with adding new sites to your portfolio or removing existing ones from your energy contract

• Novation’s and legal transfers - Support with the process of transferring contracts between parties and addressing any related queries

• Supplier issues - Help with escalating and resolving any persistent problems with your energy supplier

• Complex billing matters - Support with unresolved billing queries that your supplier hasn't addressed satisfactorily, including standing charge disputes

• Account setup - Guidance on account configuration and ensuring correct billing information across all your sites

• Consumption analysis - Help with understanding your energy usage patterns and addressing any consumption-related concerns

• Infrastructure changes - Support with meter installations, exchanges, and new connection requirements

• Occupancy changes - Assistance with managing energy contracts during change of tenancy situations

• Renewable energy - Information and support regarding green energy options and renewable technologies

When your supplier is unable to resolve an issue or you need additional support, the DfE Energy Team will act as your dedicated point of contact to help navigate these matters efficiently.

1. **Can I add additional schools to the DfE Energy for schools service as and when their contracts expire?**

Yes, you will just need to provide site information, and they can be added to the DfE account like any other school in your trust. Depending on when their current contract expires, they may need to go onto an interim rate until the next available window of opportunity to join the V30 basket.

1. **When will my Interim price be confirmed?**

If you are out of contract and need something to be put in place immediately, you will receive interim rates until the V30 delivery period commences (April).

You should receive your interim prices for electricity within six weeks of completing your documentation to join the DfE account.

For gas your interim rates should be confirmed up to 30 days prior to the contract start date.

Interim prices will be fixed until you join the next available V30 basket.

1. **When will my renewal price be confirmed?**

The energy prices will be renewed each April, and the supplier will make these prices available to all customers as soon as possible.

While the pricing will be provided by the suppliers each April the unit rates for gas and electricity will vary. Gas unit rates prices will change each month. Electricity unit prices stay the same and is reconciled on your bill the month after delivery.

1. **What data will I have access to?**

You will have access to your own account/s on the EDF and TotalEnergies Energies portals where you will be able to see your consumption and billing data.

1. **Will I still have access to Energy Sparks?**

The contract with Energy Sparks has now expired. Schools can continue to fund this, but it would be separate to the Energy for schools service.

1. **What communication can I expect from the DfE?**

Schools that sign up to the DfE Energy for schools service will receive a purchase update each month giving a forecast of what your unit rates may be for the following year.

DfE will provide information from the purchase updates that CCS share monthly.

1. **Does the Energy for schools service provide bill validation?**

There are specific key performance indicators (KPIs) within the agreement around bill accuracy, which the supplier is contractually obliged to meet.

You can also access the cost recovery contract which seeks to audit your last 6 years energy bills and identify any discrepancies.

1. **How much notice do I need to provide to exit the DfE Energy for schools service?**

To exit the DfE contract, each individual school would need to provide 30 months’ notice., this is linked with energy purchasing strategy e.g. if you joined the V30 basket on 1 April 2025, you would need to give notice to DfE to exit by 30 October 2025 to exit the contract on 1 April 2028.

Customers can only terminate within 1 month, if the building is sold, demolished or change of tenancy. The contract is an ongoing contract and will renew each year unless termination notice is given.

1. **How can I validate my past energy bills?**

To validate or audit historic energy bills you can access the cost recovery service through this link

1. **How can I mitigate any objections to my transfer?**

If having applied for your school to transfer to the new supplier we receive an objection from your existing supplier we will inform you of this. Typically, common reasons for objections include as example, outstanding invoices not paid, incorrect site address information, incorrect meter point reference numbers or termination notice not served.

We will need you to contact your existing supplier to resolve the reason for their objection. We are not able to do this for you as we do not the authority to do so.

Once you have resolved the issue with your incumbent supplier and got their agreement you need to inform DfE advising the date from which the school will be able to transfer.

EDF and TotalEnergies are unable to re-apply for a school to transfer within seven days of receiving an objection. If your supplier agrees to release the school within this period, you can ask your existing supplier to lift the objection at their end. This means the school will transfer as if there had been no objection, and the start date remains the same.

If we must wait for the objection to expire before re-applying this may result in the start date being later than the initial request. We will need to wait until we have received the school’s confirmation that the reason for the objection has been resolved.

For example, any outstanding invoices have been paid, at that point once we re-apply the transfer window recommences. Please note the new supplier will automatically reattempt to transfer the school(s) up to three times if not informed otherwise. After three successive objections DfE will have to complete and submit a new site addition template for the school.

1. **Objection process**

* EDF/TotalEnergies attempt to transfer the DfE Service
* Objection received from the current supplier
* EDF/TotalEnergies forward objection to DfE
* DfE email objection to school trust to resolve with current supplier

Possible outcomes

**Scenario 1**

1. School resolves the objection
2. Trust/school informs DfE
3. DfE informs EDF/TotalEnergies
4. EDF/TotalEnergies complete transfer to DfE contract

**Scenario 2**

1. Trust/School unable to resolve objection
2. EDF/TotalEnergies 2nd attempt to transfer (7 days after the 1st attempt)
3. EDF/TotalEnergies 3rd attempt to transfers (7 days after the 2nd attempt)
4. DfE to resubmit site addition template (which could affect the start date for supply)
5. If reason for objection resolves the supply will then transfer to the DfE contract.
6. **Does the service offer renewable energy options?**

The energy supply itself is from UK grid mix, this is a “mix” of brown and renewable energy; EDF and TotalEnergies are currently the end suppliers in the Energy for schools service.

It is the schools’ choice about what degree of renewables they want to include in that mix, each with a different cost makeup. If you require further information about the addition costs, please contact [energy.schools@education.gov.uk](mailto:energy.schools@education.gov.uk).

1. **What is the standing/daily charge rate?**

Standing charges are based on how much it costs for maintaining the energy network, operating costs like metering and billing, and costs levied by government for energy related social and environmental policy schemes. These charges apply regardless of how much energy you use.

The daily standing charge depends on your energy supplier and where you live in the country, although typically from supplier to supplier they are similar. These charges are not negotiated by CCS and are not known in advance.

1. **What is Climate Change Levy?**

The Climate Change Levy (CCL) is an environmental tax in the United Kingdom, introduced in April 2001. It is designed to encourage businesses to operate in a more sustainable and energy-efficient manner by taxing the energy they us.

Here are some key points about the CCL:

* Purpose: The CCL aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote energy efficiency among businesses
* Who Pays: It applies to businesses in the industrial, agricultural, commercial, and public service sectors. Domestic and transport sectors are exempt
* How It's Charged: Businesses pay the levy through their energy bills, which is then passed on to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)
* Rates: The rates vary depending on the type of energy used, such as electricity, gas, and solid fuels. These rates are subject to change annually.

1. **How can I be sure the appropriate 5% VAT rate is applied to my bills?**

Some schools may be eligible to pay the reduced 5% VAT rate on energy costs by following specific guidelines:

* + **Eligibility**: Schools, particularly those with charitable status, can qualify for the reduced VAT rate on energy used for non-business purposes, such as providing education
  + **Issuing a Certificate**: Schools need to issue a certificate to their energy supplier confirming that the energy is used for non-business purposes. This certificate allows them to be charged the reduced VAT rate.

1. **At what stage are we locked into the service?**

As CCS purchase for the V30 basket over a 42-month window, to leave this basket you must provide your termination notice to DfE by giving 30 months’ notice before the renewal date.

As an example for the current April 2025 V30 window, this is the date to work to,

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Basket** | **Join Deadline** | **Termination/Join Deadline** | **Leave date** |
| Variable 30 | 10 working days before 1 October | 15-Sep-25 | 31-Mar-28 |

1. **What kind of platform/portal will we have access to?**

You will have access to the supplier portals (EDF and Total Energies) where you will be able to see and pay bills, view consumption and be able to input meter readings. You will also be able to raise billing queries direct with the suppliers.

1. **Do you provide any incentives for using less gas or power?**

This is not currently in scope for the current Energy for Schools Service.

1. **What if I need more information than provided via the supplier portals?**

The supplier dashboard will be used for displaying your schools’ energy consumption/stats and billing info etc The Energy for schools service will undertake user research to test whether the provision from EDF/TotalEnergies “off the shelf” is adequate and, if not, how to fill that gap

1. **Is there any support with moving to Half Hourly (HH) meter readings?**

The DfE Energy Team are discussing with the suppliers the feasibility of HH meters as well as Smart Metering.

Further information will be made available at a later date.

1. **Are you able to provide any references or statements from other MAT’s who are part of the scheme?**

An evaluation has taken place with schools currently onboarded and we can share details on request.

Some schools who are already on the DfE Energy for schools service may be happy to be contacted. Please contact [energy.schools@education.gov.uk](mailto:energy.schools@education.gov.uk)

**Further information**

[Access Webinar - Introduction to CCS Energy - CCS (crowncommercial.gov.uk)](https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/webinar/confirmation/47666/introduction-to-ccs-energy)

[Trading strategies document](https://educationgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/Energycategory/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FEnergycategory%2FShared%20Documents%2FGeneral%2F2%2E%20Energy%20options%2FEnergy%20aggregation%2FPSBO%20Discussions%2FCCS%2F6564%2D21%20Trading%20strategies%20document%20May22%20%281%29%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FEnergycategory%2FShared%20Documents%2FGeneral%2F2%2E%20Energy%20options%2FEnergy%20aggregation%2FPSBO%20Discussions%2FCCS&p=true&ga=1)

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