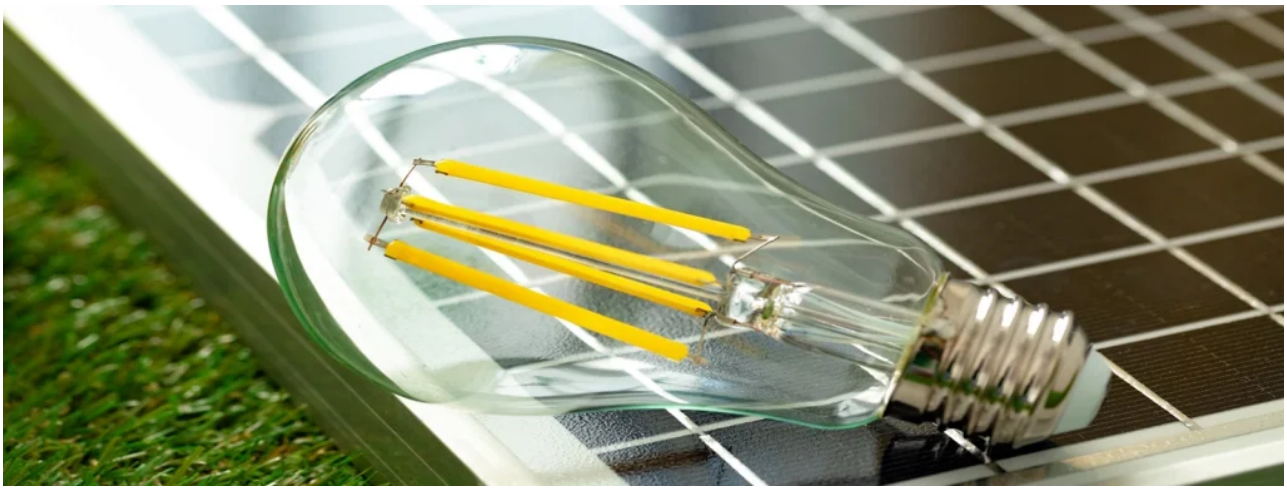
DfE Empowers Trusts to Go Green

26 June 2025



A Turning Point for Schools

Schools have long stood at the forefront of change—in education, in community values, and increasingly, in sustainability. Today, the Department for Education (DfE) has taken a bold step to empower that leadership further.

Academy trusts can enter into finance or lease agreements such as those for LED lighting systems or to support renewable activity without needing prior DfE approval

This decision removes a critical administrative barrier that has, until now, limited large-scale renewable adoption across the education sector. With this change, trusts can act decisively to decarbonise their estates, reduce energy spend, and lead the charge on climate action—all without unnecessary delays.

Why This Change Matters

This is more than a regulatory adjustment. It is a strategic opportunity for academy trusts to take control of rising energy costs and contribute meaningfully to national net zero goals.

Trust leaders can now:

- Implement renewable installations using lease or finance models,
- Develop trust-wide renewable strategies with scale and consistency,
- Act without DfE approval bottlenecks, accelerating timelines and

outcomes.

Previously, the requirement for case-by-case approvals slowed progress—even when projects were financially and environmentally sound. That barrier is now gone.

The Financial and Educational Advantage

Energy costs continue to rank among the top three pressures on school budgets. Renewable energy presents a proven way to reduce long-term costs while insulating trusts against price volatility.

But the benefits go beyond finance:

- Schools become visible leaders in sustainability—engaging pupils, parents, and local communities.
- Renewable energy systems offer real-time learning opportunities across science, geography, and citizenship curricula.
- A trust-wide strategy enables procurement consistency, operational efficiency, and long-term planning.

This is an investment not just in infrastructure—but in school identity, values, and future-readiness.

What School Leaders Should Do Next

This policy change gives schools permission—and encouragement—to take the next step. Here's how to begin:

- **Review Your Estate**

Identify renewable potential based on usage patterns, and future plans.

- **Engage Internal Stakeholders**

Bring together estates, finance, and curriculum leads to explore integrated benefits.

- **Explore Finance Models**

Consider lease, PPA (power purchase agreement), or asset finance solutions aligned with your trust's financial framework.

- **Develop a Rollout Plan**

Start small with priority sites or go trust-wide—either way, build a timeline that aligns with site access and capital strategy.

- **Link to Strategic Goals**

Ensure that your plans support broader trust ambitions, such as climate targets, Ofsted readiness, and board-level risk reduction.

A Clear Path to Progress

For schools ready to move, we recommend a simple phased approach:

Phase	Action
1	Map potential sites and assess potential savings
2	Select financing and procurement routes suitable for your trust
3	Deliver installations with planned impact reporting and community engagement

This framework enables fast but thoughtful decision-making—tailored to your context.

Final Reflections

These change are about giving schools the freedom to lead, to act strategically, and to invest in a future that is sustainable, resilient, and educationally aligned.

By lifting old restrictions, the DfE has placed its trust in school leaders—and handed them the tools to act with vision and purpose.

We encourage every academy trust to seize this moment. Whether you're at the start of your sustainability journey or ready to scale, **now is the time to lead with confidence**.