How Your School Can Still Benefit from Solar Energy

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The recent announcement of Great British Energy marks a major step in the UK's shift toward a greener, more affordable energy future. As part of the initiative, 200 schools across the country will be fitted with solar panels, alongside 150 hospitals. The message? Clean energy is no longer a luxury—it's a public good.

If your school is one of the 200, congratulations. But if you're not, don't worry: there are still plenty of ways to get in on the solar revolution.

What the Selected 200 Schools Stand to Gain

The 200 schools receiving solar installations through Great British Energy will benefit in several significant ways:

- **Lower Energy Bills**: According to government figures, schools could see annual savings of £3,000–£20,000, depending on size and energy use.
- **Budget Stability**: Fixed solar energy costs mean greater protection from volatile market prices.
- **Reduced Carbon Footprint**: Each school's transition to solar is expected to remove several tonnes of CO_2 emissions annually.
- **Educational Value**: Solar installations create real-life learning opportunities around sustainability, STEM, and climate action.
- **Future-Proofing**: With many schools facing older, inefficient buildings,

solar helps modernise infrastructure without increasing operating budgets.

It’s a powerful combination: save money, improve learning environments, and contribute to national climate targets.

But here’s the good news—these benefits aren’t limited to the 200 schools selected.

What Can *Your* School Do Now? 5 Smart Solar Strategies for Every School

Even if your school didn’t make the initial list, there are still ways to explore solar power—often with little or no upfront capital.

1. **Tap Into Public Sector Decarbonisation Funds**

The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) offers grants to schools looking to install solar panels, upgrade heating systems, or improve building efficiency.

- Delivered by Salix Finance
- Applications typically open in cycles, so timing is key
- Many schools have already secured funding with well-prepared bids

Tip: Team up with your trust or local authority to submit a collaborative bid—larger projects often receive more favourable review.

2. **Explore Solar Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)**

A PPA allows a third-party company to install and maintain solar panels at no cost to the school. You then buy the electricity at a fixed (and lower) rate than your current provider.

 No upfront cost
 Long-term savings
 Maintenance included

PPAs can be a great option for schools without capital funding available, and many suppliers are now targeting the education sector directly.

3. **Partner with Your Local Authority or MAT**

Some multi-academy trusts and local authorities are coordinating large-scale solar rollouts across their estates—often accessing better pricing through economies of scale.

If you're a standalone school, reach out to your LA or neighbouring MATs to explore joint procurement options or community energy partnerships.

4. **Use the Procurement Act 2023 to Source Smarter**

The Procurement Act 2023, set to come into force later this year, offers new flexibility and clarity around sourcing sustainability solutions like solar.

This means:

- Easier access to independent suppliers with tailored solutions
- Greater freedom to assess value and social benefit, not just lowest price
- Simpler collaboration with other schools and public bodies

Now is the time to explore trusted procurement networks that understand the solar landscape and can support you from market engagement to installation.

Read more about how to prepare for the Procurement Act here.

5. **Make the Case: Solar Is a Curriculum Asset Too**

Some of the most successful solar projects we've seen didn't just save money—they created **learning moments**.

Schools have:

- Used live energy dashboards in science and maths lessons
- Tied sustainability efforts into Eco-Schools and Ofsted goals
- Engaged pupils in calculating energy outputs and climate impact

When presented this way, solar isn't just a facilities upgrade—it's a leadership story and community win.

Final Thought: Solar Is No Longer Out of Reach

The Great British Energy initiative is a fantastic start—but it's just that: a start.

With the right procurement strategies, funding awareness, and local partnerships,

every school in the UK can begin its solar journey—regardless of whether you're on the government's shortlist.

At *The School Supply Network*, we're already helping schools explore:

- Supplier-neutral advice on solar
- Procurement routes that work under PSDS or PPA models
- Collective purchasing opportunities with MATs or local clusters

Let's make clean energy something that's not just available to a few—but accessible to all.