

# Private Schools Can Drive the Solar Revolution

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## How UK Private Schools Can Lead with Immediate Savings and Impact

As energy costs soar and the UK races towards Net Zero by 2050, private schools have a rare chance to lead the charge in sustainable education. With the HM Treasury halting Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) for state-funded schools in July 2025, local authority-led schools and academies are mired in red tape, delaying vital solar projects. Yet, for the UK's 2,456 independent schools, this is a golden moment to act. Free from bureaucratic constraints, private school owners can swiftly install solar panels, slash energy bills, enhance their school's prestige, and inspire students—all while securing a competitive edge in a fee-sensitive market facing new VAT pressures in 2025. Act now to transform your school into a beacon of sustainability and savings.

### A Golden Opportunity for Private Schools

Unlike state-funded schools, private schools operate outside the Department for Education (DfE) and Treasury oversight, granting them unparalleled autonomy in decision-making. The Treasury's PPA restrictions, driven by the reclassification of PPAs as public borrowing under IFRS 15, have stalled solar projects for at least 25 state schools, risking financial losses for community energy organizations. Private schools, however, can bypass these hurdles, pursuing solar adoption

through upfront investment or flexible financing without needing DfE approval. With energy prices at 36p/kWh and rising, private schools are uniquely positioned to reap immediate financial, environmental, and educational rewards.

## **Key Benefits of Solar Adoption for Private Schools**

### **1. Significant Energy Cost Savings**

A 50 kWp solar system, costing £40,000-£60,000, can save £5,000-£10,000 annually, with lifetime savings exceeding £200,000. For example, St. Mary's School in Surrey installed a 30 kWp system in 2024, cutting energy costs by 30% and redirecting savings to new science labs. With energy prices at 36p/kWh and rising, solar protects your budget against volatility, especially with VAT on fees looming. Maintenance is minimal (£500-£1,000/year), and modern panels are reliable for 25-30 years, ensuring long-term value.

### **2. Environmental Impact and Market Appeal**

A 50 kWp system reduces CO2 emissions by 20-25 tonnes annually, equivalent to planting 500 trees. This commitment enhances your school's appeal to eco-conscious families, a growing demographic in 2025 admissions cycles, boosting enrollment in a competitive market.

### **3. Educational Value and Student Inspiration**

Solar projects enrich STEM curricula, as seen at Reading School, where 192 panels generate 44,800 kWh yearly, fueling lessons on renewable energy. Students gain practical skills, preparing them for green careers and boosting your school's reputation as a forward-thinking institution.

### **4. Competitive Edge**

By adopting solar now, your school can stand out in a crowded market, showcasing innovation and fiscal responsibility while state schools remain stalled by approvals. This positions your school as a leader in sustainability, attracting families prioritizing environmental values.

## **Streamlined Decision-Making: Private Schools vs. State-Funded Schools**

The decision-making process for private schools is markedly simpler than for state-funded schools and academies, which face stringent regulations:

- **State-Funded Schools and Academies:** The Treasury's PPA pause requires DfE approval for new agreements, delaying projects and risking

cancellations. Maintained schools must also seek Secretary of State consent for leasing under IFRS 16, adding bureaucratic layers. Even with recent DfE policy changes allowing academy trusts to bypass some approvals, land transactions still require consent, and funding constraints persist. Only 20% of UK schools currently have solar panels, reflecting slow adoption due to these barriers.

- **Private Schools:** Free from DfE and Treasury oversight, private schools can make swift decisions through their governing bodies or trustees. Whether opting for upfront investment, loans, leases, or third-party ownership, they face no external approval requirements beyond local planning permissions (often minimal for rooftop installations under 1 MW). This autonomy allows private schools to act during optimal installation windows, such as summer holidays, avoiding disruptions and maximizing immediate benefits.

## **Taking Action Without Red Tape**

Don't miss the summer 2026 installation window—ideal for minimizing disruption. Here's how to act:

1. **Book a Free Feasibility Study:** Contact an MCS-certified installer (e.g., via [mcs-certified.com](https://mcs-certified.com)) for a no-cost assessment by October 2025 to plan ahead.
2. **Explore Flexible Financing:** Choose upfront payment, loans, or leases with providers like Equipment Leasing Solutions, with no DfE approval needed.
3. **Secure Permissions:** Confirm with your local authority; most rooftop systems are permitted development, taking weeks, not months.
4. **Install and Save:** Complete installation during holidays and apply for Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) payments to earn 2-15p/kWh for excess energy.
5. **Engage Your Community:** Use solar data in lessons to inspire students and promote your school's green leadership on social media.

Speaking to the **School Supply Store & Network** Philip Emsley, Managing Director of UEC Energy said "As someone who has worked closely with the major energy companies and installers on behalf of schools across England and Wales on their journey towards renewable energy, I see this moment as a real turning point for the independent education sector. At UEC Energy, we've

supported many schools not just with the technical side of selecting the right solar systems and financing models, but also with the often-overlooked administrative processes required to get projects live on time and within budget. There are a lot of solar installers in the UK, but selecting the right one is imperative and saves on all the headaches prior to or once under contract.”

“For private schools, the autonomy highlighted in this article cannot be overstated. While academies and state schools continue to face significant delays with the approvals process, independent schools can act decisively locking in cost savings, protecting against future energy price volatility, and visibly demonstrating sustainability leadership to students, parents, and their wider communities. At Cirencester College, UEC Energy provided a solar and wind training platform for students to learn about renewable energy ensuring that the next generations are familiar with the installation of, the science behind and the adoption of wind and solar technologies. This really is a golden opportunity for private schools, one that will reward them financially, reputationally, and educationally for decades to come.”

### **Immediate Benefits and Long-Term Impact**

By acting now, private schools can see immediate benefits:

- **Financial Savings:** Energy bill reductions start as soon as the system is operational, with savings reinvested into educational programs or facilities.
- **Reputation Boost:** Solar adoption signals a commitment to sustainability, attracting environmentally conscious families and strengthening community ties.
- **Educational Enrichment:** Real-time energy data enhances STEM learning, preparing students for green careers and fostering environmental awareness.

Over the long term, private schools can achieve energy resilience, protect against price volatility, and contribute significantly to the UK’s Net Zero goals. With 2,456 private schools in operation, the potential for widespread impact is substantial—if even half adopt solar, the collective CO2 reduction could equate to millions of tonnes over the systems’ lifespans.

With 2,456 private schools poised to lead, your school can be a trailblazer. Don’t

let rising energy costs or state school delays hold you back.

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