Schools Are Not Just Facing a Renewal Decision — They Are Facing a Contract-Clarity Problem

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The School Network Energy Reset

Why The School Network is helping schools understand their current energy position before they renew, extend, compare or switch

Before a school can make a strong energy decision, it first needs clarity on its current contract position,
billing, procurement route, usage and future options.

Many schools are not facing only a renewal decision

They are facing a contract-clarity problem. Renewal dates matter, but they are only one part of the picture.
Schools may already be inside fixed contracts, extensions, framework routes, rolling arrangements or
trust-level buying decisions that are not yet fully understood.

Central Theme

Clarity first. Better decisions next.

In the previous feature, The School Network explored why energy can no longer be treated as a simple utility renewal.
This follow-on article takes the next practical step: helping schools understand where they stand before making the next move.

For many schools, academies and trusts, energy now cuts across finance, procurement, estates, compliance,
sustainability, risk management and long-term budget planning.

Why this matters now

More routes

Schools may be using suppliers, brokers, council arrangements, frameworks, TPIs or trust-level contracts.

More complexity

Contract dates, notices, billing issues, water, VAT/CCL and usage data all affect the real position.

More pressure

Deadlines can force reactive decisions if schools wait until close to renewal.

More value in review

Even schools already “covered” may still need support with validation, reporting and future planning.

Energy is now a live national conversation for schools

The Department for Education’s Energy for Schools route has become an important part of the school energy landscape.
The article notes that more than 1,000 schools have already signed up, showing that schools are actively seeking
more stability, support and clearer routes through the market.

But the wider picture is much bigger. Many thousands of schools remain outside that confirmed sign-up figure,
and many of them may already be operating through other arrangements such as council frameworks, existing broker
relationships, TPIs, direct supplier renewals or independent support.

> *“The issue is not whether schools have options. The issue is whether schools understand the option they are currently in.”*

The question is not only “when does the contract end?”

Contract end dates are important, but they are not the full picture. A school may believe it has a clear renewal date,
only to discover that a notice period has passed, an extension has been applied, a framework route has rolled forward,
or a third-party procurement process has already shaped the next step.

Schools may still have unresolved questions around:

- Billing accuracy
- VAT and Climate Change Levy treatment
- Water charges
- Meter data and usage patterns
- Historic recoveries
- Broker fees or commissions
- Standing charges and supplier terms
- Notice periods and future renewal timing
- Sustainability planning

That is why schools need to move beyond a narrow renewal mindset. A renewal date may be the trigger,
but understanding the current position properly is where the real value sits.

A school can be “covered” and still need support

One of the strongest points in the article is that being in a contract does not always mean the energy issue
has been fully dealt with. A school may already be covered by a supplier, framework or broker-led route,
while still needing help with cost validation, reporting, recovery checks and future planning.

Support may still be needed for:

- Checking whether bills match agreed terms
- Identifying historic overcharges
- Reviewing VAT and CCL treatment
- Understanding water costs and billing
- Checking meter data and usage
- Preparing for future renewal windows
- Planning for solar, LED or building controls

- Improving reporting and visibility for leadership teams

Schools are already working with TPIs — the issue is quality, clarity and value

Many schools already use third-party support in some form. That may include brokers, consultants, TPIs,
local authority energy teams, framework providers, public buying organisations or procurement advisers.

The question is not simply whether third-party support exists. The question is whether the school understands
the arrangement properly and receives strategic support instead of being moved from one contract to the next.

Why passive extensions can create risk

Energy notices, renewal reminders, framework updates and extension documents do not always reach the right person
at the right time. In some cases, schools may not realise that a cut-off date has passed. In others,
an extension may already have been applied without the school fully understanding what that means.

Where contract clarity becomes essential

- What has actually been agreed
- How long the arrangement lasts
- Whether charges are correct
- What notice requirements apply
- Whether any billing issues exist
- What future decision point should now be planned for
- Whether the school is receiving enough support beyond the contract itself

The opportunity is not only at the point of switching

A common misunderstanding is that energy support only matters when a school is free to switch supplier.
The article pushes back on that idea. Even where a school is already in contract, there may still be meaningful
support needs around billing, tax treatment, usage, water, reporting and future renewals.

> *“A school that cannot switch today may still need support today.”*

What schools should check before making the next energy decision

Before renewing, extending, comparing, switching or simply staying where they are, schools should review the full picture.

1. Current contract status

Is the school in contract, out of contract, extended, rolling, on an interim rate, or nearing review?

2. Notice periods

Have renewal, extension or termination notices been received and seen by the right person?

3. Procurement route

Is the current arrangement through a supplier, broker, TPI, local authority, framework or trust-level contract?

4. Billing accuracy

Do bills match contract terms, meter readings, usage profile and agreed rates?

5. VAT and CCL

Is the school being charged correctly, and are any relevant reliefs or reduced-rate treatments applied?

6. Water

Has water been reviewed alongside electricity and gas, or is it sitting separately with limited oversight?

7. Usage and metering

Does the school understand when and where energy is being used, and whether avoidable waste exists?

8. Broker transparency

If a third party is involved, does the school understand fees, commissions and the support included?

9. Future planning

Is the school only renewing, or is it linking procurement to consumption reduction and sustainability?

The strongest energy decisions are made before pressure builds

The article makes a clear case for reviewing energy early rather than waiting until a deadline is close.
When time pressure takes over, comparison gets harder, questions are missed and decisions become reactive.

1. Clarify

Understand contracts, notices, billing, routes and reporting before assuming the position is clear.

2. Review

Check available routes, support needs, charges, usage data and renewal timing well in advance.

3. Prepare

Build a plan that supports cost control, procurement confidence and future sustainability decisions.

What good energy management should look like

Good energy management should give schools clearer control, better visibility and stronger decision-making
across the whole energy position — not just another quote at renewal time.

- Central visibility of contract end dates, notice periods and extensions
- A clear view of which sites are fixed, extended, rolling or approaching review
- Joined-up planning across electricity, gas and water
- Regular bill validation, not just renewal support
- VAT and Climate Change Levy checks where relevant
- Review of historic overcharges or recovery opportunities
- Transparency around broker or TPI costs
- Usage monitoring across sites, not just unit-rate comparison
- Stronger links between procurement, cost control and sustainability planning

Why The School Network is continuing this work

The article explains that The School Network is continuing its energy procurement and cost-control focus because
the market is moving quickly. DfE-supported routes are gaining attention, framework and council routes remain active,
brokers and TPIs continue to support schools, and many schools still need practical guidance.

The aim is not to push every school toward the same route. It is to help schools understand their current position,
ask better questions and access the right support before committing further.

The School Network Energy Reset

The School Network is inviting schools, academies and trusts to share the energy questions, contract issues
and challenges they are currently facing. This may include uncertainty around renewal dates, framework routes,
broker arrangements, billing concerns, VAT/CCL questions, water issues, high usage or future energy planning.

Schools may want to raise questions about:

- Renewal date uncertainty
- DfE or framework route questions
- Council or supplier extensions
- Unclear broker or TPI arrangements
- Billing or overcharge concerns
- VAT/CCL questions
- Water contract or billing issues
- High usage or limited reporting
- Sustainability and future energy planning
- Support needed before the next renewal window

Contact The School Network Energy Reset

Share your school’s energy questions

If your school, academy or trust is reviewing energy contracts, unsure of its current position,
approaching renewal, comparing options or simply wants to understand what questions it should be asking,
get in touch with The School Network Energy Reset team.

Email the Energy Reset Team