

Take Control of Your Energy Future

20 August 2025



How Schools Can Thrive with Bespoke Contracts in 2025

As school leaders, you pour your energy into delivering exceptional education while managing tight budgets. With energy costs consuming 5-10% of your funds, renewing contracts strategically is a powerful way to free up resources for your students. Most schools renew in September/October/November or March/April, and the Procurement Act 2023 offers a golden opportunity for academy trusts to explore bespoke energy contracts outside traditional frameworks. This article provides practical guidance for each renewal window, celebrates the potential for higher savings and tailored solutions, and shares insights from peers excited about this shift. We're here to support you in taking control of your energy future with confidence.

Guidance for September/October/November Renewals

The autumn window, tied to the UK's energy supply year (October 1 to September 30), is a prime time for gas and electricity contract renewals. Starting 12-18 months early helps you avoid out-of-contract rates, which can be 30-50% higher.

- **Key Steps:** Kick off with an energy audit to understand your sites' usage patterns. Partner with independent energy brokers or suppliers to design

bespoke contracts, such as flexible purchasing to buy energy at the best times or hybrid models blending fixed rates for stability with flexible elements for savings. For multi-academy trusts (MATs), tailoring deals to each site's needs—different schedules or heating demands—can unlock exceptional value.

- **Why Go Bespoke:** Frameworks offer standard rates, but bespoke contracts can save 10-36% by aligning with your unique needs, from low-usage sites to renewable integrations. Independent brokers provide expert market insights, making it easy to navigate volatility and secure deals that fit your budget and goals.
- **Timeline Tip:** For autumn 2025, aim to finalize by mid-September to lock in favorable terms before winter demand rises.

Guidance for March/April Renewals

The spring window aligns with the government's financial year (April 1 to March 31), perfect for syncing with budget planning and reviewing winter usage.

- **Key Steps:** Use a post-winter audit to spot inefficiencies, like excessive heating costs. Work with independent suppliers or brokers to craft bespoke contracts for multi-meter setups, incorporating flexible tariffs or sustainability measures like solar panels. Bespoke options let you design terms that match your school's unique profile, from small sites to sprawling trusts.
- **Why Go Bespoke:** Frameworks' one-size-fits-all pricing often misses site-specific efficiencies. Bespoke deals can save up to 36% compared to framework rates, especially for MATs. Direct negotiations open doors to innovative solutions, like green energy tariffs, aligning with your sustainability vision.
- **Timeline Tip:** Start in October/November 2025 to align with fiscal cycles and secure the best terms before spring market pressures.

The Procurement Act 2023: Your Key to Freedom

Effective from February 2025, the Procurement Act 2023 empowers academy trusts to break free from rigid frameworks and design energy contracts that fit like a glove. For trusts managing multiple sites and meters, this means crafting solutions tailored to variable schedules, site sizes, or net-zero ambitions. The Act

simplifies direct supplier negotiations, ensuring compliance while enabling dynamic pricing and renewable options.

You're not just buying energy—you're shaping a strategy that supports your school's mission.

Higher Savings and Tailored Solutions: The Power of Bespoke Contracts

Traditional frameworks prioritize compliance but often deliver generic pricing that overlooks your school's unique needs. Sourcing outside frameworks unlocks transformative savings and flexibility.

- **Real Savings:** Schools using bespoke, flexible contracts have achieved up to 36% savings compared to framework benchmarks. For a MAT with 10+ sites, this could mean £50,000-£100,000 annually, funding new tech, staff training, or eco-friendly upgrades. Independent sourcing can cut bills by 10-20% below framework rates by optimizing multi-site procurement and shielding against market spikes.
- **Why Bespoke Shines:** Unlike frameworks, bespoke contracts account for low-usage sites, peak-shaving technologies, or renewable opportunities. You can mix fixed and flexible terms, buy energy strategically, or integrate solar and LED upgrades, aligning with both your budget and sustainability goals.
- **Success Story:** A 15-site MAT in Yorkshire switched to a bespoke contract in 2024, working with an independent broker to secure a hybrid deal. They saved 25% on energy costs—£75,000 annually—while adding solar panels to three schools, boosting their net-zero progress and freeing funds for student programs.

How to Start: Your Path to Bespoke Contracts

Transitioning to independent sourcing is straightforward with the right support. Here's how to begin:

1. **Conduct an Energy Audit:** Hire a consultant or broker to analyse your sites' usage, identifying savings opportunities. Many offer affordable or free initial audits.
2. **Find Reputable Brokers:** Search directories like the Utilities Intermediaries Association or ask peers for recommendations. Look for

brokers experienced with schools and multi-site setups.

3. **Ask the Right Questions:** Request brokers to propose flexible or hybrid contracts, explain risk management (e.g., hedging against price spikes), and outline sustainability options.
4. **Ensure Compliance:** Confirm that your broker aligns with Procurement Act requirements, ensuring transparency and legal protections.

Brokers are eager to support schools—reach out and invite proposals to find the perfect partner for your needs.

Voices from School Leaders: Excited About the Possibilities

We've gathered insights from school leaders across our network who are exploring bespoke contracts for their 2025 renewals. They share their excitement, needs, and desire for broker support.

1. **Headteacher, Multi-Academy Trust in the South West:** "Our October renewal has us excited to explore beyond frameworks. With 12 sites, we're looking for bespoke contracts that reflect each school's usage. We'd love brokers to approach us with flexible options to save enough for new learning tech while guiding us through market changes."
2. **Business Manager, Academy in the North East:** "For our March renewal, we're considering independent sourcing to support our net-zero goals. Bespoke contracts could integrate solar across our sites and save 20%. We need brokers to offer clear audits and practical advice to make this work."
3. **Finance Lead, Rural School Cluster:** "September's renewal is a chance to try something new. Frameworks haven't fully met our needs across scattered sites, so we're open to tailored, hybrid contracts. We'd welcome brokers with ideas to save £15k a year for student programs."
4. **CEO, Large MAT in the Midlands:** "Our April renewal is an opportunity to leverage our 20-site scale outside frameworks. We're excited about bespoke deals with renewables to meet decarbonization goals affordably. We need brokers to bring strategic insights and tailored terms."
5. **Head of Operations, Independent Academy in London:** "With November approaching, we're exploring bespoke options under the new Act. Our multi-meter setup needs data-driven, flexible contracts. We're keen for brokers to propose plans that save enough for staff training."

Seize Your Energy Future

Whether your renewal is in autumn or spring, the Procurement Act 2023 empowers you to explore bespoke energy contracts that deliver 10-36% savings—potentially £50,000-£100,000 annually for larger trusts—while aligning with your unique needs. Independent sourcing isn't about going it alone; it's about partnering with expert brokers to craft solutions that save money and support sustainability. Start now: conduct an audit, invite broker proposals.

Image by [MD Molla](#)