Why Solar PV Still Matters for Schools

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Exhibiting at the Schools & Academies Show 2025, Barker Associates explains to the School Supply Store & Network that Solar PV remains one of the most practical routes for schools that want to cut energy costs and take meaningful climate action. Yet with several major funding streams withdrawn and uncertainty around current government policy, many school leaders are unsure how to move forward. The result is hesitation at a time when energy bills remain unpredictable, and sustainability targets are tightening.

Recent changes have only added to the confusion. The cancellation of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) and the Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) in June left a noticeable gap. These programmes provided some of the strongest financial support available for low-carbon upgrades across the public sector. Their loss was felt immediately in schools that had been planning long-term improvements or were depending on grants to unlock stalled projects.

More recently, the Department for Education placed a temporary hold on PPA-funded solar schemes. For many schools, PPAs had been a simple option: no upfront cost, predictable repayments and guaranteed access to renewable energy. With that door closed for now, leaders are reassessing what is possible and how to avoid missteps in a crowded supplier market. The fear of choosing the wrong partner or signing into an unsuitable contract is understandable, especially when

budgets are already under strain.

Even with these setbacks, the situation is far from bleak. There are still realistic and affordable steps schools can take today to strengthen their energy resilience. Not every solution requires large capital investment. Many improvements can be delivered through spend-to-save models, where the financial returns help cover the ongoing cost. Solar PV remains one of the most promising options in this category.

Capital costs for solar installations have fallen steadily over the past decade. Systems are more efficient, monitoring is easier and performance guarantees are stronger. When combined with rising energy prices, this creates a compelling case for investment. A well-planned solar PV system can help a school generate about a quarter of its electricity on site. That reduces reliance on the grid and shields budgets from sudden price spikes. For schools trying to plan several years ahead, that stability is hard to ignore.

The benefits also extend beyond cost control. Solar installations are a visible commitment to climate responsibility. Panels on a rooftop send a strong message to pupils, families and the wider community. They turn sustainability from an abstract topic into something real and measurable. Many schools use their systems as teaching tools, linking energy generation to lessons in science, geography and citizenship.

The key to making the right decision is trusted, independent advice. With the PPA pause and the loss of major grant funding, careful planning matters more than ever. Schools need clear information on procurement, delivery models, payback periods and long-term maintenance. Independent guidance helps leaders compare suppliers on quality rather than just cost and ensures the final system matches the school’s size, goals and energy profile.

Solar PV remains one of the strongest routes toward lower bills and lower emissions. Funding has shifted, but the opportunity has not. With the right advice, schools can still take confident steps toward a cleaner and more resilient future.