

[News story: Price comparison site launched to help schools cut energy bills](#)

Schools paying too much for their energy will find it easier to ditch overpriced deals and switch to a cheaper supplier, using a new web-based service launched today by Education Secretary Damian Hinds.

The site allows schools to get instant quotes from a range of gas and electricity firms, similar to price comparison websites available for household energy.

It will help schools avoid fees charged by energy brokers and reduce the more than £10 billion a year that goes on non-staffing costs – leaving more money for heads to spend on frontline teaching.

The latest figures from 2016/17 show state-funded schools in England spent more than £584 million on gas and electricity. The average secondary school spends around £90,000 a year on energy. Using the Department for Education's existing energy deals, schools have already reported savings of up to 14% – the price comparison website will help build on this.

It follows the Department for Education's recent crackdown on excessive fees charged by supply agencies, with the launch of an online tool to help schools find temporary staff. A free-to-use teacher vacancy service is also being rolled out to cut recruitment costs for schools – currently up to £75 million per year.

Due to the complexity of schools' energy needs, many currently have to go through brokers, which can incur high fees. These can be as much as 5p per kilowatt hour – which can add up to thousands of pounds per year. The new website will allow schools to bypass brokers' fees and deal directly with suppliers, inputting information about their energy use to generate tailored, transparent quotes, which they can then compare.

It will also list providers offering renewable energy, giving schools a simple way to reduce their environmental impact.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Many households shop around for the best deal on their gas and electricity – and I want to help schools do the same.

By saving money on their energy bills and avoiding high broker fees, the more money schools will have to spend on what really matters – getting the best teachers into classrooms and giving their pupils a great education.

This website is the latest step in our efforts to help schools reduce unnecessary costs, building on the School Resource Management Strategy I launched last year to provide practical advice and support.

The website, developed with Crown Commercial Service, follows the Education Secretary's pledge at the National Association of Head Teachers' annual conference in May to work with schools to bear down on unnecessary costs so that more money can be spent in the classroom.

It is launching with a limited number of energy suppliers initially, but more will be added over time.

Schools can already use the Government's benchmarking site to see how their energy spend – among other costs – compares with similar schools across England.

Other support the Department for Education has made available includes:

- An online tool to help schools avoid excessive supply agency fees when employing temporary staff – one school in Merseyside saved £2,500 in three months;
- Rolling out a free-to-use teacher vacancy service – this will help schools recruit effectively and cut recruitment costs, which are currently up to £75 million per year;
- Recommended deals that are helping schools to save money on the things they buy regularly, such as printers and photocopiers – one school in the North West has saved an estimated £40,000 on its printing costs;
- A schools buying advice service, being piloted in the North West and South West, providing hands-on support and advice to schools on complex procurement. One school saved £75,000 across a three-year cleaning contract, while 82 schools in the South West have saved an estimated £137,000 on water;
- A network of advisers providing practical support on resource management, working with those schools that will benefit the most. During the pilot phase of 72 deployments, advisers identified £35 million of potential savings for schools.