

FAQ

Got a question about School Switch? Our easy to follow user guide walks you through the whole switching process step by step, from registering as a user right through to getting a quote and signing a contract. We recommend you read this guide thoroughly before starting your switching journey.

Alternatively, you may find the answer to your question below:

Registration Process

- **Are independent and maintained schools eligible to use the School Switch?**
 - Maintained and independent schools are eligible to join the Schools Switch Service. Colleges are also eligible.

- **I can't log into the portal**
 - To log in, you first need to register on the site. Click "Register" at the top of the page, enter your contact details and then click the "Register" button.
 - A temporary password will then be sent to your email address. Click the hyperlink in the email, which will take you to the School Switch login page. Use your email address and temporary password to log in. When you log in, you will be prompted to change your password.
 - If you can't remember your password, click the Forgot Password link at the bottom of the login page. An email will be sent to you with a temporary password. Enter your email address and temporary password and click "Login". You will then be prompted to change your password.

- **I've just registered for School Switch, now what do I do?**
 - The first thing to do is make sure you've got your energy bill in front of you as you'll need this to register your meters. Our user guide talks you through the process of setting up your meters so make sure you've got that to hand too.
 - The first step in the switching process is to register your school and your energy meters. This means that the next time you log in, you won't have to enter this information again, as all your meter information will be stored in the portal. To do this, click the

“Home” tab at the top of this page, and then scroll down to the “Register” button to begin.

- **What should I choose as my ‘Business Type’ category on the portal?**
 - ‘Community Interest Company’ would be the option for all schools and academies for the business type category.

- **What is my registered number?**
 - Your school should have a unique number issued by the Department for Education (DfE). This should be entered as part of your application under the “Customer Details” section.

- **Why do I have to input my direct debit details as part of the meter registration process?**
 - This is to ensure the instantaneous quote process runs smoothly and you can contract with your chosen supplier. Your details are stored securely in the system and no money will ever be taken by School Switch. Money will only start being taken from your account once your new energy contract with your chosen supplier begins.

- **What should I choose as my ‘SIC Description’ (Standard Industrial Classification) category on the portal?**
 - ‘Education’ would be the correct option for all schools and academies.

- **I’m trying to add my meters, but the portal is saying I do not have any meters (gas and electricity) registered at my site address(s)?**
 - School Switch uses a central industry database to see which meters are registered to your postcode. If your meters don’t appear, first check your energy bill to make sure you’re entering the right postcode (please note, this may not be the same postcode as your postal address).
 - There is an obligation on energy suppliers to use the central industry database to update their users’ meter details. If your meters still don’t appear when you’ve entered the correct postcode, you should contact your energy supplier to ask them to

update the database (ECOES for Electricity and Xoserve for Gas) with the correct information. Once this has happened, your meter will then appear in School Switch.

- If you still can't find your meters, you can contact our helpdesk at usshelpdesk@gemserv.com or on 0333 1038 477.

- **How many School Switch accounts can a school/academy/Trust register?**

- We recommend that each organisation has access to register once and they have a primary person who has the authority to sign contracts and direct debits.

- **What do I do if my current supplier was not included in the drop-down box when completing the bulk template file?**

- To proceed with the application, please select any supplier from the list and be assured this will not impact your tender outcome.

Understanding Technical Jargon

- **What is a half hourly meter and how do I know if I have one?**

- A half hourly meter automatically sends a meter reading every half hour to your energy supplier. You can check if you have a half hourly meter by looking at the S number on your electricity bill. This is also known as your MPAN, or Meter Point Administration Number. If the number in the top left box is 00, then this means you have a half hourly meter.
- Half hourly meters allow energy suppliers to accurately bill you based on the actual consumption you are using, rather than estimated bills. They also allow you to better understand your consumption and whether there are areas you could save energy, for example by switching things off overnight or at weekends.

- **What is an AMR or smart meter and how do I know if I have one?**

- AMR stands for Automated Meter Reading. An AMR meter is like a data logger. It will record your energy consumption on a regular basis and share this with your energy supplier.

- A smart meter also records your energy consumption and shares this with your energy supplier, but in addition, it allows your supplier to communicate back to the meter. This is known as two-way communication.
 - If someone has to manually take meter readings, for example on a monthly basis, then your meter is not an AMR or Smart meter. Typically, in this case, your Meter Point Administration Number (MPAN) will start with 03 or 04. Your MPAN can be found on your electricity bill.
- **What are MPAN or MPRN numbers and where do I find them?**
 - Each electricity meter has a unique Meter Point Administration Number (MPAN) and each gas meter a unique Meter Point Reference Number (MPRN). These can be found on your electricity or gas bill.
 - MPAN number is sometimes called a 'supply number' or 'S number' on the electricity bill. The MPRN is sometimes called an 'M number' on the gas bill.
 - Your MPAN is 21 digits long and starts with an S.
 - Your MPRN is between 6 and 10 digits long.
 - To get a quote from School Switch, we need to know which meters you want to get a quote for. When registering your meters on School Switch, all meters associated with the postcode you enter will automatically be pulled from a central energy industry database. You should check the MPAN and MPRN numbers against your energy bill to ensure the meter numbers are correct.
- **What is the difference between Fully Fixed and Standard contract types?**
 - Fully Fixed contracts mean that the standing charge, the unit rate and all other costs related to supplying your energy are fixed for the length of the contract. The only things not included in this quote is VAT and the Climate Change Levy (CCL) charge. This allows for a good comparison between different tariffs being offered by suppliers as all the same charges are included.
 - Under a Standard contract, only the standing charge and unit rate are fixed. Everything else, such as costs for maintaining the energy

distribution and transmission systems, as well as charges related to Government schemes to support renewable energy deployment, can change during the contract term. This makes comparison between different suppliers much more difficult, as each supplier can choose to include different elements of these passthrough costs in their quote.

- School Switch will only provide Fully Fixed quotes, which means you will not receive unexpected charges midway through your contract. It is important to understand that other organisations may only provide Standard quotes, which may appear cheaper initially but could have hidden costs later on. When comparing quotes, make sure you're comparing Fully Fixed quotes.
- **What is the difference between 100% Renewable (REGO backed) and 100% Renewable (Carbon Offset) tariff types?**
 - REGO stands for Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO). To get a REGO certificate, energy generators must demonstrate to Ofgem, the energy regulator, that the energy they are generating is from renewable sources, such as wind or solar power. This certificate can then be used to prove to the end customer that their energy supply is renewable.
 - Carbon Offset means that the energy itself is not necessarily renewable. Instead the energy supplier pays for another activity to be undertaken, such as planting trees or investing in clean energy projects. These activities remove the same amount of carbon from the atmosphere as is released from using the energy, meaning no additional carbon is released into the atmosphere.

Getting a Quote

- **I'm a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) or a Local Authority operating on behalf of several schools. Can I get a quote for all my schools in one go?**
 - Yes, you can. When you register, first enter the address and contact details for the MAT or Local Authority as the "New Customer". You can then enter the details of the individual school sites, where the meters are located, later in the process under the

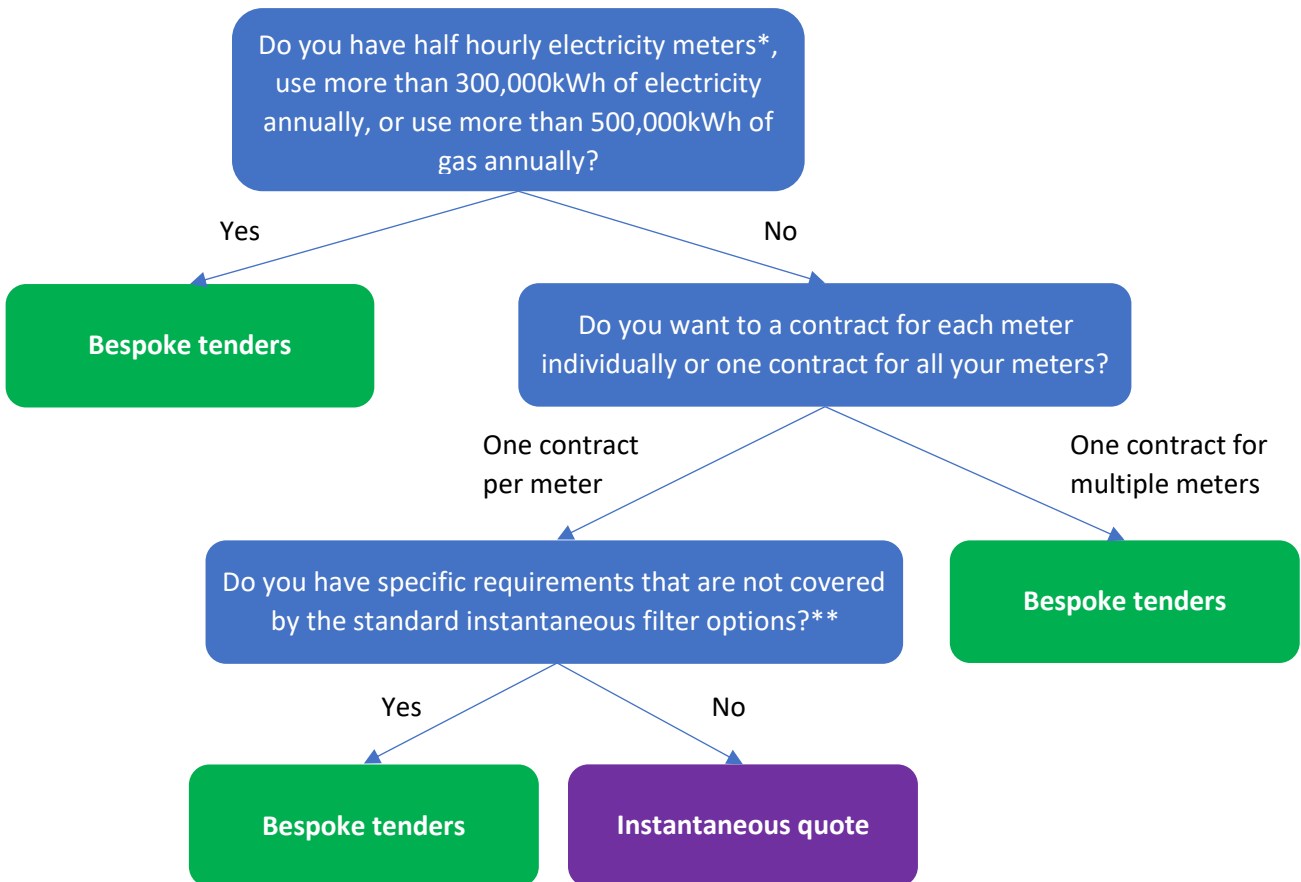
“New School” section. If you have more than twenty meters, you can use our spreadsheet template and bulk upload function to make uploading these details quicker and easier.

- If you would like individual contracts for each of your meters, then you can use the instantaneous quote route and sign a contract immediately if you have the authority to do so. Alternatively, if you would like to get a single quote for multiple meters, you will need to use our bespoke tender process instead. Our user guide explains both routes.

- **When should I get an instantaneous quote and when should I get a bespoke quote?**

- An instantaneous quote is for any non-half hourly electricity meters (Meter Point Administration Numbers (MPAN) beginning with 03 or 04) with an annual consumption of less than 300,000kWh or any gas meters with an annual consumption of less than 500,000kWh. You will be able to find your annual consumption or your MPAN on your energy bill.
- An instantaneous quote can only be provided for one meter at a time, meaning each meter will have its own contract.
- A bespoke quote is for all half hourly electricity meters (MPAN beginning with 00), electricity meters with more than 300,000kWh annual consumption, gas meters with more than 500,000kWh annual consumption or if you want to get one contract for multiple meters. This will allow the energy suppliers to provide you a quote that meets your exact needs.
- You can also use the bespoke option if you have specific requirements that are not found in our standard filter options.
- This diagram explains when you should use the instantaneous and when you should use the bespoke routes:

Instantaneous vs Bespoke Quotes



*Your Supply Point Number, which is a 21 digit number and can be found on your bill, will start with 00 if it is a half hourly meter

** Standard filter options include 1, 2 or 3 year contract length, Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO) or Carbon Offset generation, and direct debit or receipt of invoice payment methods

Bespoke tenders take at least one week to be returned. This is to allow the energy suppliers enough time to review your specific requirements and provide a bespoke quote. Quotes will only be valid between midday and 4pm on the day the quotes are returned so it's important to make sure you will be available to make a decision during these times when choosing the date you want the quotes to be returned.

Instantaneous quotes are returned immediately and are valid until 5am the following morning.

- **Can I save a copy of the quotes I've received?**
 - Yes, you can. On the instantaneous quotes page, select all the quotes you would like to save. A button will appear above the "3 Year" tab labelled "Print/Download Selected". Click this button and a pdf file will be generated with all your selected quotes.

- Your bespoke quotes will be available for download too. When your quotes are returned, you will receive an email asking you to log into School Switch and view your quotes. You will then be able to download all the quotes returned.
- **I've got a quote for my meter but I'm not ready to sign the contract yet. How long are my quotes valid for?**
 - For instantaneous quotes, prices will be held until 5am the following day. If you are unable to sign a contract before then, you will need to run the quote process again when you are ready to sign to get the current prices.
 - For bespoke quotes, suppliers need at least two weeks to review the information provided by you about your meters and consumption and send back their quotes. You can select the date you want your quotes to be returned. On this day, you must be able to sign a contract for your chosen quote between midday and 4pm, otherwise the quotes will no longer be valid.
 - Energy prices change on a daily basis, so in order to keep prices low and ensure suppliers don't build in additional risk premiums, prices must be accepted on the day provided.
- **I've got my quotes but they're higher than my current contract. Why is this?**
 - Your School Switch quote is the best price available to the public sector at the time of your quote.
 - Your quote may be higher than your current contract because the price of energy globally has increased over the past few months. You may have seen this in your own energy bill at home as well. We will always show you the best price available at that point in time.
- **I've got my quotes but they're higher than other renewal quotes I've received. Why is this?**
 - Your School Switch quote is fully fixed. This means that your quote includes all charges associated with your energy provision, including the cost of the actual electricity or gas (the commodity cost made up of the unit rate and standing charge), plus other

charges (the non-commodity costs) which cover things like the maintenance of the pipes and wires that enable your energy to reach your school, as well as other Government charges to cover things like the development of renewable energy and the smart meter rollout. The only things not covered by your quote are your Climate Change Levy (CCL) and your VAT.

- Other organisations may only provide Standard quotes, which includes only the commodity costs and not the additional charges. You will still need to pay these charges at some point during your contract, but you will not know up front how much these are or when you will be invoiced for them.
- It's important to make sure that you're comparing similar quote types, otherwise you may not be getting the best deal for your school in the long run.

Still can't find the answer to your question? Our helpdesk is open Monday to Friday, 12pm to 4pm excluding Bank Holidays. You can email us at usshelpdesk@gemserv.com or call us on 0333 1038 477.