



Robust energy management policies are proving vital to enabling schools to reduce their carbon footprints – and significant heating and lighting costs.

They also help schools meet the requirements of the national curriculum, teaching pupils about green issues and encouraging them to take responsibility for the environment.

Now Simplicity Energy Management has combined the two in an innovative solution and a growing number of schools are taking it up, reporting positive results both on the bottom line and in the classroom.

The Simplicity system has bespoke software that interprets information from sensors fitted to major energy-using equipment in schools: boilers, heaters, computers and lighting. The system gathers data in real time, enabling schools to closely monitor their energy use via a dedicated website.

What makes the system even more pioneering is its ability to send email alerts to school caretakers and site managers about issues that need addressing – for example, inappropriate levels of heating that can be reduced, saving consumption and therefore money.

In addition, all the data gathered by the sensors can then be used as part of the second element to the Simplicity system – an interactive online learning resource called Ecohound which helps KS1 and KS2 pupils learn about good and bad energy practices and the impact they have on the environment.

Simplicity, based in Keighley, West Yorkshire, says the system can save a school at least five per cent on its energy costs, but it has the potential to save as much as 40 per cent.

Freemantle Church of England Community Academy, Southampton, has cut its energy bills by a fifth in the last two years. Headteacher Kevin Barnett said: "Knowing exactly where and when lights have been left on and where heating can be turned down has made a significant difference to our energy bills."

Durham County Council awarded the Simplicity system to Green Lane CE Primary School, Barnard Castle in recognition of its commitment to green issues. The school now has sensors in four classrooms, its staff room and on three boilers/water heaters.

Eco teacher Chris Minikin said: "Ecohound is a great way to bring to life the importance of using energy wisely and how what we do in school has an impact on the environment."

Rich Hurst, lead for sustainability education at Durham County Council, said: "This pilot project is part of the countywide School Carbon Reduction Programme through which we are encouraging pupils and staff to learn about energy, investigate how they use it in school and then make simple changes to stop wasting it. This school is the first in the County to have access to real time data and we are keen to learn how this will help them save money on their energy bills."