

ITASS Data Security Guidance

Unique Pupil Numbers (UPNs) - Data Security Issues

- UPNs were introduced into maintained schools and pupil referral units in England and Wales to **facilitate tracking of pupils' progress and movements through the school system**, yielding better information (for schools, LAs and central government) on pupil performance and related factors
- To comply with Data Protection legislation:
 - » The UPN must **lapse when pupils leave school**, at the age of 16 or older if a pupil attends a maintained school providing post-16 education
 - » As far as possible, the UPN must be a **blind number** held on the school's SIMS system – it should only be output from SIMS when the school is required to provide information to the LA, the DCSF or QCA, or to a school to which the pupil is transferring
 - » The UPN should not appear on any **paper record or document** relating to the pupil
 - » Pupils have the **right under the Data Protection Act** to receive on request a copy of any information the school holds about them (including their UPN). However, schools should not give out details of pupils' UPNs unless this is specifically requested, nor take any positive steps to inform pupils or parents of the UPN system.
- If you need to use a unique number for pupils in your school, use the **Admission Number** rather than the UPN
- In the case of **looked after children**, UPNs may be transferred to the LA's Social Service departments.
- There are certain **bodies to whom the UPN may** (but does not necessarily have to) **be provided** and they include the relevant LA, Ofsted, the QCA and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA)
- There are circumstances in which the UPN may be provided to **persons carrying out research in the educational achievement of pupils** and who require individual pupil information for that purpose. Any transfer of such information will also need to comply with the Data Protection Act. UPNs should not be used as a replacement for pupil identification systems already in place in local non-educational departments or in research programmes.
- Although schools will normally be under a duty to pass on a pupil's name and address when requested by the **Connexions service**, they must only pass on other information, including the UPN, where a parent (or a pupil if over 16) has not instructed the school to withhold it
- If a pupil is on **witness protection** or has had a **change of identity**, issue a new UPN and do not record the previous UPN as a Former UPN
- When a pupil is **adopted**, the school should consult the responsible authorities to ensure that it is recording correctly the child's details and is not compromising the child's safety and confidentiality. The school should usually issue a new UPN and should discard the old UPN; it should not record the old UPN as a Former UPN.

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Links

Download the current DCSF "Policy and Practice Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools" from:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/ims/datamanagement/UPN/>

Download the DCSF "UPN frequently asked questions" document from:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/ims/datamanagement/UPN/upnfaq/>