

Schools Data Team

Additional Notes – Temporary UPNs

For: All Schools

Information about UPNs

What is a UPN

A unique pupil number (UPN) identifies each pupil attending a school and is expected to remain with a pupil throughout their school life regardless of any change in school or local authority. A UPN is allocated on first entry to a school, the UPN is generated using the nationally specified formula.

What is a temporary UPN?

Temporary UPNs are allocated when a school receives a pupil who may already have a UPN, but the receiving school does not yet know the UPN (for example, a CTF from the pupil's previous school has yet to be obtained).

The formula for temporary UPNs is identical to that for permanent UPNs, except that characters 11-13 are a two-digit serial number plus a letter, rather than a three-digit serial number, for example, X001800017**01A**.

Temporary UPNs should be replaced immediately once the valid UPN is known with the temporary UPN being reported in the 'former UPN' field.

When calculating the check letter, use the check letter (see steps below) to convert the letter to a numerical value and then follow the steps detailed to calculate the check letter.

Why use a UPN?

Section 537A of the Education Act 1996 enables the Secretary of State to require schools to provide certain information, including UPNs, to local authorities and the department including: key stage assessment information and pupil level census returns. Section 408 of the same Act enables the Secretary of State to require the transfer from school to school of pupil records, including UPNs, using CTF. Schools are legally entitled to transfer such data and do not need to seek pupils' or parents' consent to do so.

It should be noted that only local authority-maintained schools have a statutory duty to transfer data including the UPN by use of CTFs. For all other establishment type, this remains best practice.

UPNs are also used to facilitate the transfer of school-based education and attainment data through the school system in England. The system enables accurate and timely data sharing thereby strengthening procedures for target setting and contributing to the raising of standards.

Data sharing is between:

- schools
- local authorities
- central government

What does a UPN stand for?

A UPN is comprised of 13 characters that are:

- A single check letter
- The Local authority code
- The establishment for the school allocating the UPN (4 digits)
- The academic year of allocation (2 digits)
- A school allocated serial number (3 digits)

The combination of these characters is a simple means of guaranteeing uniqueness as no two schools can allocate the same UPN to two different pupils.

Please note that a UPN is unique to the pupil to whom it is allocated. A UPN must never be re-issued to another pupil. Once a pupil's school career is complete, their UPN must be archived as part of their school record.