



**MIAP**  
Managing Information  
Across Partners



# MIAP: USING THE UNIQUE LEARNER NUMBER (ULN)

## Case Study

Embedding the ULN within internal systems has supported the effective administration of services to learners and assisted general administration tasks at Coombe Dean School.

## Unique Learner Number

A Unique Learner Number (ULN) is a 10-digit identifier which is allocated to anyone over the age of 14 involved in UK education or training. Learners retain the same number throughout their lives. The number is vital for information sharing, particularly to support Diploma award and sharing of information between the Diploma Aggregation Service, awarding bodies and centres involved in Diploma administration.

Each ULN is issued and held by the Learner Registration Service (LRS). The LRS uses the number to index each learner's identity details.

The 10-digit ULN has been designed to ensure that no additional meaning can be inferred from its structure e.g. geographical location, level of learning. Its purpose is purely to provide a unique identifier for each individual for use within the education sector.

Learners will need to use their number each time they want to see or confirm the details held about them on their Personal Learning Record. The ULN also means information within the Personal Learning Records is secure and cannot be shared with other organisations (including statutory bodies), without the prior consent of the learner.

## Coombe Dean School



With a role of 1122 aged 11-18 Coombe Dean is a mixed co-educated comprehensive school located on the edge of Plymouth. The majority of pupils live outside the local catchment area and travel to school by bus. Since 2003 the school has specialised status at Maths and ICT.

In March 2009, Ofsted reported that "Coombe Dean is an outstanding school where students flourish in an environment that embodies a strong sense of community, responsibility and inclusion." Head teacher P Frean's philosophy reflects this, "We are committed to being an effective school, always working to make a difference, ensuring that what should happen does and what might be possible becomes so. To achieve this we seek to empower students as well as staff, parents as well as Governors, so that everyone understands what we are seeking to do and how best they might achieve it."



## Embedding the ULN

Coombe Dean has a growing number of students taking Diplomas. The ULN is required for every Diploma student in order that they can be registered with awarding bodies. In addition, Coombe Dean has been extensively involved in functional skills trials. The school aims to ensure that all students undertaking functional skills assessments will have their results 'captured' for future use.

The team at Coombe Dean are therefore using, and planning to use, the ULN in several ways:

- To support the administration of Diplomas.
- To support the administration of functional skills assessments.
- To upload, download & move learner information using the ULN as an identifier.
- To share information with other organisations including other schools, colleges and consortia. The school aims to use the ULN with the Local Authority who often request or send data to the school.
- To record and monitor learning events, using the ULN as an identifier.

- To match data from multiple sources, using the ULN as the main identifier. The sources can be internal or external to the school, for example Fisher Family Trust, the Local Authority or the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring.
- To open 'learner accounts' with agencies outside of the school. Diploma students must have accounts registered via the Diploma Aggregation Service. Wide ranging partnerships in Plymouth mean that students need to be tracked across a number of institutions.

## Issues and resolution

Some challenges needed to be overcome. There was a perception that the ULN duplicates the role of the Unique Pupil Number (UPN) and that its usefulness is reduced because not all organisations are currently using ULNs. Resources also had to be found to ensure that Diploma students were registered on time and some assistance had to be sought from an IT specialist.



## Required business change

- Using the ULN means transformational change. Ensure staff are informed and receive training in the use of the ULN, particularly the exams officer and the data control staff.
- A ULN could not be generated for students under Year 9 to support functional skills. A distinct record has to be kept for students below Year 9 who have achieved a functional skills award.
- More effective & efficient data sharing: sharing of a single source of learner information
- Improved data accuracy

## Benefits

Coombe Dean expects to realise the following benefits as a result of embedding the ULN in their processes:

- A reduction in administration: for rekeying & verifying learner information

## Lessons learned

If Coombe Dean were starting the embedding process again, they would ensure that all staff are thoroughly briefed on the reasons why it is being done and what the benefits are.

They would want to register all students on entry in Year 7 and all students who join the school.

Coombe Dean recommends that the same practice is undertaken with all members of a consortium to ensure consistency and shared understanding.

## Testimonials

"Coombe Dean School has been successful in embedding the ULN for some students within our internal systems which has supported us to ensure learners can be uniquely identified for the purposes of administering diplomas and other services in the future."

**Mark Woodlock**, Assistant Head Teacher, Coombe Dean School

If you are interested in participating in the development of a case study, to share your experiences of using the MIAP services and the arising benefits, please contact, **Barbara Clark**, MIAP Benefits Manager by email at [barbara.clark@miap.gov.uk](mailto:barbara.clark@miap.gov.uk)