

19 March 2010

This email is an official communication to schools from the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Information for schools about mephedrone

Dear Colleague

You will be aware of recent media coverage on the 'legal high' mephedrone and I know that a number of headteachers have expressed concerns. I wanted to write to make clear the latest information on the drug and to reassure school staff on the powers they have under current legislation.

- Mephedrone (chemical name 4-methylmethcathinone, also known as MCAT, 4MMC, meow meow and bubbles) is a drug with similar effects to amphetamines (speed) and ecstasy. It typically comes in the form of a white powder and, while it can be considered to be illegal to sell, supply or advertise it for human consumption, it is not currently an illegal drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Full details are set out in the recently published [mephedrone factsheet](#), which also covers the effects and risks of taking the drug. School staff, pupils and parents can also access the latest information via the Talk to FRANK website (www.talktofrank.com) or helpline.

Some questions have been raised as to whether teachers can confiscate such substances, given that they are not prohibited substances. As current guidance makes clear, schools **do** have the power to confiscate inappropriate items, including a substance they believe to be mephedrone (or any other drug whatever its legal status) in line with the school's behaviour policy. They **do not** have to return such confiscated substances. As *School discipline and pupil behaviour policies: Guidance for schools* makes clear, schools may choose not to return an item to the pupil, including:

- Items of value which the pupil should not have brought to school or has misused in some way might - if the school judges this appropriate and reasonable - be stored safely at the school until a responsible family adult can come and retrieve them.
- Items which the pupil should not have had in their possession - particularly of an unlawful or hazardous nature - may be given by the school to an external agency for disposal or further action as necessary. This should always be followed by a letter to the parents confirming that this has taken place and the reasons for such an action.

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, the Government's independent experts on drug misuse is currently reviewing the harms and control, under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, of mephedrone and other similar cathinone derivatives. Subject to this advice, the Government will take immediate action. We will include any updated information and any changes of policy in the revised drugs guidance for schools, to be published this summer.

I want to be absolutely clear that schools can deal effectively with mephedrone and other drugs (both legal and illegal) under existing guidance.

All schools should have a written drug policy setting out how they will deal with drug-related incidents. This should include an approach to working with the local police (particularly through Safer School Partnerships or the local Neighbourhood Policing Team) and Children's Services (through the local Healthy Schools co-ordinator).

I have included links to the relevant guidance below.

- [Behaviour and discipline](#)
- [School drug policies](#)
- [Safer School Partnerships](#)



VERNON COAKER MP