


<p>Media Studies: The media have been very interested in RDT and it has meant a great deal of attention for a school that has put such a programme in place. It makes it hard to make informed and balanced decisions when the media are paying such close attention. Especially if a tabloid like the 'News of the World' has sponsored the trials to make news.</p> <p>But more importantly, it makes it very difficult to agree that this is all in the pupil's best interest. When a school starts inviting the media in to witness pupils being tested for drugs, it suggests that head teachers are more interested in publicity than best practice in drugs education and prevention.</p>	<p>Grade</p> <p>F</p>
<p>International Studies: RDT has been trialled in a number of countries and has been used in some American states. It has been subject to a number of legal trials and has also been reviewed as part of a large-scale national study.</p> <p>Some schools made testing a mandatory part of extracurricular activities. But, rather than reducing drug use, they found that people chose to drop out of these activities. This was unfortunate - engagement in such activities is a key way of reducing drug problems.</p> <p>In a study of 76,000 students by the University of Michigan, levels of drug use were actually higher in schools with drug testing than those without. Contrary to what advocates for testing say, there was no evidence that testing regimes discouraged drug use.</p>	<p>E</p>

Headteacher's Comments:

Random Drug Testing (RDT) arrived in the school early this year and, despite initial hopes, has proved to be a disruptive influence.

We had hoped that RDT would have a benign effect on pupils, and discourage use of drugs. But instead we have been concerned that RDT may encourage other pupils to hide their drug use better, switch to drugs which are harder to detect, or truant from school when tests were expected.

We are also concerned that RDT's arrival has meant that we have been distracted away from effective models of drug education and prevention. As the comments from other teachers' highlight, many aspects of RDT's performance have been distinctly lack-lustre and so, it is with some regret, that we feel that RDT is not suited to our learning environment and so will be asked to leave at the end of this term.



General Attendance and Behaviour: Even when you've done nothing wrong, processes like RDT are stressful. Rather than concentrating on lessons, there's every risk that pupils will worry about tests. Tests can and do throw up 'false positives', where household medicines or other items suggest an illegal drug has been used. So imagine sitting around, waiting to find out if you've been selected for a test, and then waiting to find out what the results are. More stress, more anxiety, increased chance of truanting from school: all the factors that actually contribute to substance use amongst young people.

Even when substance use has been identified as an issue, exclusion from school will rarely be the appropriate response: education, support and, where appropriate drug treatment will be the right response in most circumstances. Such interventions will work best where the young person feels safe enough to discuss their drug use with someone that they trust - not because they have failed a drugs test.

It is hard to keep the outcomes of RDT confidential in school settings: any pupil who is the subject of additional school attention following a RDT will inevitably be suspected, rightly or wrongly, of drug use.

Further Reading and Where to Get Help

[For help or advice on schools and drug policy contact:](#)

Children's Legal Centre: www.childrenslegalcentre.com: clc@essex.ac.uk

[For drugs information and advice](#)

Frank: www.talktofrank.com 0800 77 66 00

[Further reading](#)

Making Sense of Student Drug Testing: Why educators are saying no: [ACLU/Drug Policy Alliance: Jan 2004](#)

Random Drug Testing of Schoolchildren – A Shot in the Arm or a shot in the foot for drug prevention: [Neil McKeganey: Joseph Rowntree Foundation: 2005](#)

Drugs – Guidance for Schools: [DfES: 2004](#)

Inside the orange room - how pupils are tested for drugs: [Guardian: 11.1.05](#)

Four week wait for results at drug test school: [Guardian: 7.1.05](#)

Questions raised as school starts random drug tests : [Guardian: 6.1.05](#)

School launches drug-testing programme: [Guardian: 5.1.05](#)

Pupils to face random drug tests: [Guardian: 29.12.04](#)

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