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PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE DRUG USE



## **Student drug testing in the United Kingdom benefits academic performance**

The Abbey School at Faversham, Kent has announced some results of its widely-publicized three-year pilot program of random student drug testing—the first such program in the UK. According to an article in News of the World, Mr. Walker gave the project “full marks” after it wiped out drug taking among pupils who, one year before, had self-reported drug use at a level of about 40 percent of students. Mr. Walker had this to say about the program: "Parents want children to learn in a drug-free environment. This scheme can guarantee this." And in an article for BBC News, Mr. Walker had this to say: "Anybody who says they don't have a drug problem in their school isn't telling the truth."

The pilot, begun in 2004 by now-retired Head Teacher Peter Walker, had the support and endorsements of Education Secretary Ruth Kelly and Prime Minister Tony Blair. Abbey School also found a sponsor for the program's initial trial period - national Sunday newspaper, News of the World. As a result of the school's program success, the Kent County Council is planning to implement testing programs in several Kent secondary schools and Abbey School will retain the program out of its own budget. The government will commission research based on this new Kent pilot to establish whether there is a direct link between random testing and behavior, attendance and academic achievement.

Information released on the Abbey School pilot project:

- In 2005 Abbey School students achieved record results in their GCSE\* exams.
- Five good GCSE passes were achieved by 40% of pupils, compared with 26% in 2004 and 32% the year before.
- Only one student tested positive for drugs.
- 86% of students were eligible for the random testing program
- Oral fluids were used as the testing specimen

\*General Certificate of Secondary Education - taken at about 16 years of age, an entry requirement for level 3 study (further education).

Sources:

“Couldn't Do Better, School Head's Praise for Drug Test Results.,” by Ryan Sabey, *News of The World*, April 24th, 2005. From Peter Stoker, National Drug Prevention Alliance (UK)

“Kelly suggests random drugs tests for pupils,” *Gulf Times*, 15 April, 2006.  
“More schools to have drugs tests,” *BBC News*, May 30, 2006.