



Safer, socially-distant drug testing for schools



Fingerprint-based drug screening enables social distancing for both staff and pupils when testing, while also offering a more hygienic and dignified approach

Most schools already operate a zero-tolerance approach to drug abuse, with clear policies stating that the supply, possession or use of drugs is unacceptable and not permitted on school premises, when wearing the school uniform or when representing the school. For some less serious cases, with mitigating circumstances for example, a head teacher may decide to suspend a pupil or issue a final warning, however the normal sanction for possession, use or supply of drugs is expulsion.

While schools may look to their PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) education activities to help raise and discuss potential drug abuse issues, they also recognise the need for a more proactive approach with suspected pupil drug use. Within their drug and alcohol policies, schools usually declare the right to ask pupils under suspicion to take a test and traditionally this typically means using a urine or saliva-based method.

Understandably, much of a school's current health focus will be taken up with COVID-19 detection and testing. However, it is still essential to ensure adherence to school drug policies throughout the pandemic and beyond. Not surprisingly, traditional types of drug tests have proved difficult for organisations to administer under COVID-19 social distancing guidelines.

Depending on the type of drug test used, ensuring safe and hygienic drug testing during the pandemic is proving to be an increasingly complex challenge for organisations of all sizes. Adhering to the government's guidance on social distancing, minimising time spent in close contact with others and wearing face coverings in an enclosed space, is difficult with traditional drug testing methods. Oral fluid tests require the collection of an individual's saliva in close proximity, with no mask, while urine drug tests also involve the handling of messy and biohazardous samples.

Introducing a socially-distant drug testing approach for schools

In this situation, a much simpler and safer approach to drug testing would be useful. One that's quick and hygienic and that will allow schools to enable social distancing for both staff and pupils during use. The portable Intelligent Fingerprinting drug screening system directly addresses this requirement.

Fingerprint-based drug testing is quick and easy to use and can be completed while fully adhering to social distancing guidelines – maintaining the safety of both the tester and the pupil. It is a really simple and hygienic process as both parties can remain socially distant at all times. Pupils can self-administer their own fingerprint sample collection, while always keeping at least 2m away from the tester.



Socially-distant drug testing for schools – how it works

To begin, the pupil takes the fingerprint drug screening cartridge from its wrapper, presses all ten fingerprints in succession onto the sample collection pad, and then slides the tamper-evident locking cover across to protect the sample. The pupil then steps away to allow the staff member to collect the cartridge and insert it into a small, portable

reader that analyses the test cartridge and provides a positive or negative screening result for each drug in the test in just 10 minutes.

The fingerprint collection approach is both dignified and hygienic, with no need for intrusive oral swabs or messy urine sample collection. This removes the need for close face-to-face contact and there's no requirement for testers to handle biohazardous body fluids. In addition, because the process doesn't require an oral swab, face masks can be worn throughout the process.



A more cost-effective approach to drug testing

Using in-house fingerprint-based testing instead of more traditional approaches such as urine testing can also unlock significant savings for schools. Immediate efficiency savings include being able to carry out testing quickly and easily within a classroom or an office. There's also no longer any need to cordon off toilet facilities to dedicate their use to urine sample collection. In addition, because the system is portable and simple to use, schools can run their testing programme themselves in a safe and convenient location at their convenience and as required.

This in-house benefit also removes the need and risk of bringing external testing providers into the school if a test is required, and enables greater flexibility when tests need to be conducted quickly if the school has reason to suspect the use of drugs or substances. The fingerprint test's ease-of-use and rapid results can also make it a useful addition to support PHSE sessions around drug abuse. Similarly, using the system for educational or deterrent purposes can assist as part of a school's proactive drug abuse policy.

To find out more about how fingerprint drug testing can help support your school, and ensure safe and socially distant drug testing, call us now on +44 (0)1223 941941 or visit www.intelligentfingerprinting.com