The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

St. Petersburg Schoolchildren Forced to Take Drug Tests

By Daria Litvinova

September 28, 2015

Prosecutors claim there were no violations in the way the tests were conducted.

Eleven students in the 8th and 9th grades of St. Petersburg's School No. 380 were forced to take a drug test at school last week, the Novaya Gazeta opposition-leaning newspaper reported Sunday.

Testing schoolchildren for drugs is legal, the report said, and has been ever since the law outlining volunteer testing came into force in December 2013. But the testing that took place in St. Petersburg was far from voluntary, according to the newspaper.

Several classes were interrupted Thursday by men in plain clothes accompanied by a dog and a school official who explained a drug search was under way, the report said. The dog did a lap around the classrooms, and any students it stopped near were taken to the school library.

The 11 students the dog had apparently indicated spent two hours locked in the library, the report said, waiting for the mobile laboratory of the Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN) to arrive. Their parents were ordered to come to the school and give written permission for their children to undergo testing, which took place in the school toilets, the paper cited parents as saying.

Olga Agunovich, the school's principal, told reporters that the raid had been organized by the Prosecutor's Office.

"I was also uncomfortable about the procedure; kids need a more delicate approach and I said as much, but the inspectors told me that was the protocol," she was cited by Novaya Gazeta as saying Sunday.

"We were warned that the Prosecutor's Office would carry out such raids during the school year," she added.

Children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov is aware of the incident and has promised to look into it. "The legitimacy of the actions will be investigated," he wrote on Twitter.

Prosecutors claim there were no violations in the way the tests were conducted, but according to the Health Ministry guidelines for testing, testing can only be carried out in a medical facility by medical specialists, not by law enforcement agencies, the report said.

Contact the author at d.litvinova@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/09/28/st-petersburg-schoolchildren-forced-to-take-drug-tests-a49890