

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why don't you kick a kid out who is obviously "bad?"**

All children are capable of improving. That's not just philosophy; that is proven. The question is whether or not they can improve in our setting before they have used up all their chances.

We are a Catholic school and as such, we believe in reconciliation and redemption. We are also mindful that the children here need to be safe and that if improvement is not shown, St. Vincent's may not be the right educational setting for a particular student.

### **Does the school ever ask children to leave?**

Yes. Unfortunately, it has been necessary 7 times since Mrs. Lambert and I have been in our present jobs. It is one of the worst things we do because, as you can imagine, we are devastating a child and their family. We try everything our school is capable of before asking a child to leave. We will take into consideration the age, the safety of the other children, the number of incidents, teacher observations, the mental/academic impact on other kids, whether the student is improving, and other factors when making this decision. We always consult the pastor, Fr. Norman, and the superintendent, Mark Longe when asking a student to leave.

### **What should I do if I am upset about the behavior of a student in my child's class?**

In keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, we ask that you first approach your student's teacher. They are the immediate facilitator of your student's classroom community. If you are not satisfied with their approach or resolution, then we ask you to approach the administration. We will listen. From there, we will work towards finding an acceptable resolution for all parties. We will work to do so without violating confidentiality. We will explain that parents rarely know the whole story. They know the story from their child's perspective, an isolated incident (volunteer trip to class), or second hand from other parents. The school usually has a more complete understanding of the situation.

### **What do you do about violent students?**

We strive to be clear, fair, and consistent. In the instance of violence, we must take into account the act and its contributing factors. Violence definitely has an impact on a community, however, as our faith teaches, we should look for an opportunity to reconcile. That is not always possible. So, unfortunately, as administrators we often deal with these instances on a case by case basis. However, we will ask a student to leave if we believe s/he is a danger to others. Seldom is there a student we would label as habitually violent. Usually, a child who has pushed or hit another child is not violent frequently. But, if we see a pattern of violent behavior, a student will be placed on an intervention plan or behavior contract that states the possible consequences for not

changing the violent behavior, and one possible consequence is always being asked to leave.

### **Why not have a zero-tolerance policy about certain behaviors?**

Zero-tolerance policies are not consistent with our faith. Statistics also show that zero-tolerance policies are not effective at changing/teaching behaviors. And, sometimes they may end up victimizing a victim a second time. As a Catholic School, we would rather affect true change in a person. Punitive responses tend to punish, while our restorative approach intends to teach. "It is easier in the long run to build strong children, than to repair broken adults." (Attributed to Frederick Douglass by *Dominique Smith, Douglas B. Fisher and Nancy E. Frey*)

### **Why do you not expel a student who isn't improving?**

Our Intervention Plans and Behavior Contracts operate under conditions of confidentiality. While the improvement may not be immediately apparent to the general community, it may be to the faculty and staff support team that is working with that student and his/her family. Parents may only hear negative reports. A few offenses over the course of a year may be improvement.

### **Why does it seem like nothing is being done with a problem student?**

Our Intervention Plans and Behavior Contracts operate under conditions of confidentiality. Some, like a day out of class to process with Mrs. Lambert, are apparent, while others, like mandated counseling, are not. While we try to be proactive in our approaches with relationships in the community, sometimes we are forced to react. Negative behavior is never ignored or tolerated, but, affecting positive change does take time and patience.