

The VES Honor Code

The students of VES live by a code of honor through which each student pledges not to cheat, lie, or steal and accepts the obligation of reporting to a member of the Student Honor Committee any violation which is observed. Upon enrollment or re-enrollment, each student must sign the honor pledge and is expected to live by its principles. A student who cheats, lies, steals, or tolerates such behavior among fellow students may forfeit the privilege of remaining in the school community. The enforcement of the Honor Code falls to a student-elected Student Honor Committee which is expected to uphold, explain and interpret the Honor Code.

The Honor Committee has the authority to review possible infractions of the Code by members of the student body and is charged to decide the question of guilt or innocence in each situation with impartiality and confidentiality.

Definitions and Procedures:

Cheating is giving aid to a student or receiving aid without the consent of the teacher on tests, quizzes, assignments, or examinations. Cheating includes *plagiarism* which may be described as the taking ideas from the writing of another person and passing them off as if they were the student's own. Acknowledgement of sources should be made in keeping with accepted procedures for footnoting and preparing a bibliography, including the acknowledgement of information gained through the use of electronic media.

Lying is making a self-serving statement that one knows is false regarding official matters. However, if a student initially makes a false statement, and before being accused of an Honor offense and within a reasonable period of time the student gives the true explanation of the same matter, the student will not be charged with lying.

Stealing is taking or appropriating another individual's or the school's property without permission. Stealing should not be confused with borrowing. Borrowing is the taking or receiving of an item with a *clear* understanding between the borrower and the owner of the condition under which the item will be returned or replaced.

Reporting Offenses. Each student must report within a reasonable length of time any infraction of the Honor Code of which firsthand knowledge is known. Failure of a student to report an offense is an Honor Code violation. Every effort is made by the Honor Committee to conceal the identity of the accuser, and the accuser is not required to face the accused.

Procedure for Investigating and Trying an Offense. When an infringement of the Honor Code comes to the attention of the Honor Committee, the members shall have the obligation to investigate the alleged offense. The accused and his/her Faculty Advisor shall meet with the Advisor to the Honor Committee prior to the start of the Committee's investigation who shall inform the student of the charge and give the Advisor an opportunity to counsel the student. The Honor Committee then meets with the accused and the accuser(s) separately and privately. If required, the Committee has the power to summon witnesses who must appear and testify

frankly and fully in matters pertaining to the alleged offense. If a majority of the members determine that material evidence relative to the infraction might be found on the campus, members of the Committee, accompanied by the Headmaster or faculty member designated by him, may enter any area under the jurisdiction of the school in search of the relevant evidence. Having satisfied themselves that they have established the facts in the case through investigation and testimony, the Honor Committee shall decide the guilt or innocence of the accused by a majority vote. If the accused is found *not guilty*, the work of the Committee is finished, and the accused is notified. If the accused is found *guilty*, they determine which of three sanctions is appropriate for the offense: warning, suspension or dismissal.

If the Honor Committee decides that the accused's offense merits a *warning*, the Advisor to the Honor Committee will meet with the accused and his/her advisor to so inform him/her. The accused may accept or appeal this finding. If the accused decides to appeal the verdict, he/she will do so to the Faculty Advisory Committee. In this event, a full report of the investigation will be made to the Faculty Advisory Committee by the Chair of the Honor Committee or a designated representative, and the Advisory Committee will hear the case. The accused, with his/her Advisor, then meets with the Faculty Advisory Committee to hear the verdict of the Faculty Advisory Committee.

If the Honor Committee finds the accused guilty of a violation meriting either *suspension* or *dismissal*, the Faculty Advisory Committee then takes up the case. The Chair of the Honor Committee (or a designated representative) will present an oral report of the Honor Committee's investigation to the Faculty Advisory Committee, and be present during the Faculty Advisory Committee's investigation.

If the members of the Advisory Committee also find the accused guilty of a violation of the Honor Code by majority vote, the accused shall be deemed guilty as charged. If the Faculty Advisory Committee does not agree with the decision of the Honor Committee, then a joint session of the two Committees shall be held, and the guilt or innocence of the accused shall be determined by majority vote of these Committees. A quorum consisting of no less than three members from each Committee must be present.

If the accused is found guilty, the Faculty Advisory and Honor Committees shall then by majority vote recommend to the Headmaster a penalty of suspension or dismissal. A quorum consisting of no less than a majority from each Committee must be present. This recommendation may be accepted or rejected by the Headmaster. The accused does have the right to make an appeal to the Headmaster, whose decision is final.

In a case where a student is found guilty of a breach of honor requiring suspension or dismissal, the Headmaster or designated member of the Administration should inform the accused, with the Faculty Advisor present, of the decision. The student's parents should also be notified, and a brief explanation should be given to the student body.