

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Author	Date	ED Approval	Board Adoption
EJT	April 2023	April 2023	April 2023

MIT'S Purpose: Supporting Indigenous students to achieve their educational aspirations in Melbourne

MIT'S Vision: Empowered Indigenous students inspiring strong communities

MIT'S Values: Respect Courage Culture Care

1 Introduction

A Child Safety Code of Conduct lists behaviours that are acceptable and those that are unacceptable at MITS. It provides a high-level statement of professional boundaries, ethical behaviour and acceptable and unacceptable relationships.

When individuals are clear about behavioural expectations, they are much more likely to act appropriately with each other and with children. When everyone is educated about the Code of Conduct and the reasons it is so important to uphold, the MITS environment becomes much more transparent and people are accountable for their behaviour. Above all, a Child Safety Code of Conduct helps to protect children from harm.

The Child Protection Code of Conduct applies to:

- all staff members, including non-student-facing staff and temporary or casual staff;
- volunteers;
- students;
- parents and carers;
- Third Party Contractors and service providers (including External Education Providers);
- directors of the Board of Directors;
- teaching students on placement at MITS; and
- visitors.

The Code is made available to all staff, volunteers, families and students via MITS's public website and on Sentral.

2 Commitment to child safety

MITS is committed to child safety. We want children to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

As a school for Indigenous students, we are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and to the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds. We are also committed to providing a safe environment for children with disabilities.

We are committed to the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures and all external reporting obligations.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place. Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- (a) a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves);
- (b) behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed;
- (c) someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it;
- (d) observing suspicious behaviour.

MITS is committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments. We also have site specific risk management plans which identify, amongst other things, specific situations that may increase the risk of child abuse or harm and identify mitigation factors for these risks. All teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Board directors, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors, external education providers and parents/carers should review these risk management plans, which can be found on Sentral.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

3 Definitions

Executive Committee means the Executive Director, the Principal, the Head of Cultural Strength and the Head of Wellbeing.

Child abuse means:

- a sexual offence committed against a child
- an offence committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), such as grooming
- physical violence against a child
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child

whether physical or online.

Harm is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, including as a result of child abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, emotional, sexual and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a single act or event and can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

4 Our Child Safety Code of Conduct

This Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for all adults towards students. The Code serves to protect students, reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur, and promote child safety in the MITS environment. It provides guidance on how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations.

Where a staff member breaches the Code, MITS may take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal.

MITS revises the Code annually and will undertake that review with input from students and other members of the MITS community.

MITS has the following expectations of behaviours and boundaries for all adults interacting with students within our community. This includes all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Board directors, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors, external education providers and parents/carers. The School's Board of Directors has endorsed this Child Safety Code of Conduct.

4.1 WHAT YOU MUST DO

- Behave as a positive role model to students acting in accordance with MITS's values of respect, courage, culture and care.
- Promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students.
- Be vigilant and proactive with regard to student safety and child protection issues.
- Provide age-appropriate supervision for students.
- Comply with MITS's child protection policies and procedures.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of MITS's students as young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and culturally diverse students.
- Use positive and affirming language towards students.
- Encourage students to 'have a say' and then listen to them with respect.
- Respect cultural, religious and political differences.
- Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all students to interact, and socialise.
- Intervene when students are engaging in inappropriate bullying behaviour towards others or acting in a humiliating or vilifying way.
- Report any breaches of this Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Report concerns about child safety to one of the School's Child Safety Officers or a member of the Executive Committee and ensure that your legal obligations to report allegations externally are met.
- Where an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the student involved is safe.
- Call the Police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a student's safety.
- Respect the privacy of students and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.

4.2 WHAT YOU MUST NOT DO

- Engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or expose students to such behaviour.
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with students.
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of students or discriminate against any student based on culture, race, ethnicity or disability.
- Engage in open discussions of an adult nature in the presence of students.
- Engage in any form of sexual conduct with a student including making sexually suggestive comments and sharing sexually suggestive material.
- Engage in inappropriate or unnecessary physical conduct or behaviours including doing things of a personal nature that a student can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.
- Engage in any form of physical violence towards a student including inappropriately rough physical play.
- Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a student.
- Engage in any form of behaviour that has the potential to cause a student serious emotional or psychological harm.

- Develop 'special' relationships with students that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific students or engaging with a student in any form of online forum).
- Engage in undisclosed private meetings with a student that is not your own child.
- Engage in meetings with a child that is not your own, outside of school hours and without permission from the School and the child's parent.
- Engage in inappropriate personal communications with a student through any medium, including any online contact or interactions with a student.
- Take or publish (including online) photos, movies or recordings of a student without parental/carer consent.
- Post online any information about a student that may identify them such as their: full name; age; e-mail address; telephone number; residence; school; or details of a club or group they may attend.
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

5 Report Any Concerns

MITs has a Complaints Handling Policy that includes information for staff and volunteers about how a complaint or child safety concern will be responded to. An easy-to-understand complaints information sheet will be provided for children, families and the community to know about the complaint process and the supports available to those making a complaint and those involved in the complaint process.

The MITs's Child Safety Policy includes information for directors of the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of MITs's nominated Child Safety Officers in accordance with the complaint handling policy. All documents relating to the Child Safety Policy, including the complaint handling policy, are available on Sentral.

Communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know basis'.

All complaints and child safety concerns will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

MITs staff and volunteers are required to prioritise children's safety in any response and to report all potentially criminal conduct to Victoria Police. Under the complaint handling and disciplinary policies, staff and volunteers may be subject to actions to support child safety including:

- being stood down during an investigation or terminated following an investigation
- having their duties altered so they do not engage with children at MITs
- not allowing unsupervised contact with children at MITs
- removing their access to the MITs's IT system and facilities.

Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Indirect Contact Volunteers, students, parents or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the School's Child Safety Officers.

All MITs staff, volunteers, Third Party Contractors, External Education Providers, Indirect Contact Volunteers, students, parents or other community members should be aware that there are criminal offences in Victoria for failing to act on child safety issues.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, the Police should be contacted on 000.

6 Staff Signature

This Code of Conduct must be reviewed and signed by all staff members upon commencement of their employment with MITs, and again at the commencement of each school year.

I acknowledge that I have read, understood and will act in accordance with this Code of Conduct.

(Employee signature)

Date

(Employee name)