

March 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

A recent social media challenge targeting children and young adults called the 'Momo Challenge', has created concern throughout the country due to its disturbing nature. The purpose of this letter is to make you aware of this challenge, provide you with information about it, and urge you to monitor your children's use of social media and the internet.

The 'Momo Challenge', a game found on Facebook and the app WhatsApp, features a frightening avatar who asks its viewers to perform various tasks and provide photos as proof. The 'Momo' threatens those who do not perform the task. It is reported that it is also beginning to make its way into games such as Minecraft and Fortnite.

One of the first clues for parents to be concerned with is the image of a Japanese statue of a woman with bulging eyes and scary features. Children are given the series of tasks to finally meet the 'Momo'. You can learn more about the 'Momo Challenge' by visiting the links below. Please be warned that some of the images and stories may be disturbing:

<https://www.wkbw.com/news/the-deadly-momo-challenge-are-your-children-playing-it>

<https://patch.com/pennsylvania/newtown-pa/what-momo-challenge-5-things-know-dangerous-game>

To assist you in considering age appropriateness for children's use of technology and time spent on social media, the following sites offer advice and assistance:

Safe Search Kids

Media Guidelines for Kids of All Ages

Thank you in advance for your support in this matter.

Kind regards,



K Johns
Headteacher

Top Tips if your child has come across 'Momo'

1. Tell them it's not real

Just like any urban legend or horror story, the concept can be quite frightening and distressing for young people. Whilst this may seem obvious, it's important for you to reiterate to your child that Momo is not a real person and cannot directly harm them. Also tell your child not to go openly searching for this content online as it may only cause more distress.

2. Be Present

It's important for you, as a parent or carer, to be present while your children are online. This will give you a greater understanding of what they are doing on their devices, as well as providing you with the opportunity to discuss, support and stop certain activities that your child may be involved in. As the nature of each task becomes progressively worse it's also important to recognise any changes in your child's behaviour.

3. Talk regularly

As well as monitoring your child's activity, it's important for you to discuss it with them too. Not only will this give you an understanding of their online actions, but those honest and frequent conversations will encourage your child to feel confident to discuss issues and concerns they may have related to the online world.

4. Device settings and parent controls

Ensure that you set up parent controls for your devices at home. This will help to restrict the types of content that your child can view, as well as help you to monitor their activity. In addition to this, it's vital that you are aware of your device and account settings to ensure your child's utmost safety. For example, on YouTube you can turn off 'suggested auto-play' on videos to stop your child from viewing content that they have not directly selected.

5. Peer pressure

Trends and viral challenges can be tempting for children to take part in; no matter how dangerous or scary they seem. Make sure you talk to your child about how they shouldn't succumb to peer pressure or do anything they are not comfortable with, online or offline. If they are unsure, encourage them to talk to you or another trusted adult.

6. Real or hoax

As a parent it is natural to feel worried about certain things you see online that may be harmful to your child. However, not everything you see online is true. Check the validity of the source and be mindful of what you share as it may only cause more worry.

7. Report and block

You can't always rely on parental controls to block distressing or harmful material. People find ways around a platform's algorithm in order to share and promote this type of material. Due to this, we advise that you flag and report any material you deem to be inappropriate or harmful as soon as you come across it. You should also block the account/content to prevent your child from viewing it.