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E-Safety - 'Momo' on Social Media and YouTube

Dear Parents and Carers

You may be aware of the Momo 'challenge' which has become widely discussed through the media in recent days. There have been reports of Momo images and messages hacking into children's programmes such as Peppa Pig, Fortnite and Kids YouTube, as well as children being sent messages through WhatsApp. A number of children at school have been talking about this and reported that they have seen images or heard upsetting stories related to Momo.

The school has received some information from Hampshire Police regarding Momo:

What is the Momo Challenge? Mirroring the 'Blue Whale' suicide-game of 2017, The Momo Challenge is targeted at children and young people through social media by people presenting as Momo, a terrifying looking doll.

The doll encourages them to add a contact on messaging service WhatsApp from an unknown number. Once contact is made, children are subsequently bombarded with terrifying images and messages reportedly ranging from threats and dares which encourage them to self-harm and even commit suicide.

Although known of in other parts of the world since last year, it appears to be making its way across the UK. Momo has been associated with multiple platforms used by children including **Youtube, Kidstube, Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp.**

There is a short video which explains a little about Momo. Please note that this is aimed for parents, and is not designed to be shared with children. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zznzcvc3tmNw>

The Real Motive? Police in Northern Ireland outlined in their statement that they believe the game is being used by hackers seeking and harvesting information, warning that while it is perceived as an horrendous 'suicide game' targeting children, likely to get thousands of hits, it 'misses the bigger picture'. There are now numerous variations and imitators.

NSPCC Response & Advice for Parents: A spokesperson for the NSPCC in Northern Ireland said: "The constantly evolving digital world means a steady influx of new apps and games and can be hard for parents to keep track of. "That's why it's important for parents to talk regularly with children about these apps and games and the potential risks they can be exposed to. "The NSPCC publishes advice and guidance for parents on discussing overall online safety with their children, as well as promoting **Net Aware** - the UK's only parental guide to social media and gaming apps."



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Among the most common signs to watch out for include children who:

- Become very secretive, especially about what they are doing online
- Are spending a lot of time on the internet and social media
- Are switching screens on their device when approached
- Are withdrawn or angry after using the internet or sending text messages
- Have lots of new phone numbers or email addresses on their devices

If adults are concerned or have any questions on how to approach the subject with their children, they can contact the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or [visit the NSPCC website](#). Children who are worried about their activity on apps or online games can [contact Childline 24 hours a day, online](#) and over the phone on 0800 1111.

The NSPCC and O2 offer support and guidance about keeping children safe online, here are a few things you could do:

- Visit the NSPCC and O2 NSPCC website pages,
- Call the free **O2 NSPCC Online Safety Helpline** on **0808 800 5002**
- Download the Net Aware app on the App Store or Google Play
- Pop into your local O2 store for free online safety help from a Guru - you don't even have to be an O2 customer!

As a school, we will be speaking to the children about e-safety; reminding them to only look at videos and use apps that their parents have approved, to not speak to or add contacts details of people they do not know and have not been approved by their parents, and to speak to a trusted adult at home or school if they ever are asked any personal information or see or are asked anything which makes them feel uncomfortable, worried or frightened. It would be helpful if you as parents continue to reinforce this message at home too. We will not be mentioning this game/challenge specifically or introducing the image of the Momo doll in school. We will talk to children if they do have any questions, and address and discuss any concerns that they raise about Momo or e-safety in general. As always, if any child raises any information which is concerning, we will contact you directly to make you aware.

Included with this letter are two factsheets for parents with further information and advice as well as the SMART e-safety poster we use in school. Please make sure that you are aware of what your child is viewing on their phones and online, and make sure that your child does not have access to their devices at night when you are not able to supervise what they are watching and who they are interacting with.

As always, please do speak to your child's teacher or myself if you have any concerns.

Yours sincerely

Miss Emma Grant
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