

The Momo Challenge

Dear Parents/Carers,

You may have heard of the Momo Challenge which has reportedly been appearing in children's Youtube videos, causing panic and upset amongst young people and parents.

Police have appealed to parents to not simply focus on Momo, urging them to:

- Ensure they know what their children can access online
- Ensure children understand the importance of not giving personal information to anyone they do not know
- Tell their children no-one has the right to make them do anything they do not want to do
- Use parental controls to keep their children safe

At school we will continue to support children and teach them about the importance of staying safe online

If you need any support with this, please contact Student Services and ask to speak with Mrs Ball.

It's important to note that new challenges are arising on the internet all the time. We have created this guide to raise awareness of the issue and offer advice on helping parents to talk to their children about making safer decisions online. See also our '7 conversation starters' guide for more tips on better communication with your child.

Momo is a sinister 'challenge' that has been around for some time. It has recently resurfaced and once again has come to the attention of schools and children across the country. Dubbed the 'scary doller game', Momo has been heavily linked with apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and most recently (and most worryingly)... YouTube Kids. The scary doll-like figure reportedly sends graphic, violent images, and asks users to partake in dangerous challenges like waking up at random hours and has even been associated with self-harm. It has been reported that the 'Momo' figure was originally created as a sculpture and featured in an art gallery in Tokyo and unrelated to the 'Momo' challenge we are hearing about in the media.

What parents need to know about MOMO

CHILDREN'S VIDEOS BEING HIJACKED

There have been recent reports that some seemingly innocent videos on YouTube and YouTube Kids (such as 'surprise eggs', unboxing videos and Minecraft videos) have been edited by unknown users to include sinister graphics and/or other inappropriate content. Even though YouTube monitor and remove videos that include inappropriate content, clips can be uploaded and viewed thousands of times before they get reported and removed. As a parent, it's difficult to spot these videos as the harmful content doesn't appear until purchase through the video.

DISTRESSING FOR CHILDREN

Popular YouTubers and other accounts have been uploading reaction videos, showing their experience of the Momo challenge. Some of the videos include a disclosure message warning that the content may be disturbing but others fail to warn 'audiences' and that 'viewer discretion is advised'. But these videos are still easily accessed by clicking 'I understand and wish to proceed'. The image of the 'Momo' character can be deeply distressing to children and young people and it's important to note that it may slip through parental settings and filters.

SUGGESTED VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

Video apps such as YouTube include an 'up next' feature which automatically starts playing another video based on the video just watched. Due to YouTube's algorithm, users are shown 'suggested videos' that they may be interested in. The thumbnails used on suggested videos are purposefully created to try to encourage viewers to click them. During our research, we found that when watching one Momo-related video, we were shown countless other Momo-themed videos and other scary content which would be age inappropriate for children under 18.

Top Tips for Parents

TELL THEM IT'S NOT REAL

Just like any urban legend or horror story, the concept can be used for scaring and distressing other young people. Whilst this may seem obvious, it's important for you to reassure your child that Momo is not a real person and cannot directly harm them. Also, tell your child to not go online into things for this content unless they really must.

BE PRESENT

It's important for you, as a parent or carer, to be present with your child's 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 such tech becomes progressively worse it's also important to have open conversations in your child's bedroom.

TALK REGULARLY WITH YOUR CHILD

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

DEVICE SETTINGS & PARENTAL CONTROLS

Encourage you, or your partner, to explore your devices at home. This will help to restrict the types of content that your child can view, as well as help you monitor their activity. In addition to this, it's vital that you are aware of your device and ensure settings to limit your child's online activity are enabled so that YouTube you can turn off suggested auto-play on videos to stop your child from viewing content that they have not directly selected.

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 should respond to peer pressure and discourage them from participating with online or offline. If they are unsure, encourage them to talk to your another trusted adult.

REAL OR HOAX?

As a parent, it is vital to be informed 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 if these posts cause more worry.

REPORT & BLOCK

You can't always rely on parental controls to block distressing or scary material, though and some content is platform's algorithm in order to show it and provide this type of material. So, be sure to inform them 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 accounts linked to prevent your child from viewing it. Also encourage your child to report harmful or inappropriate content to the platform.

FURTHER SUPPORT

Speak to the safeguarding lead within your child's school should you have any concerns regarding your child's online activity or malicious content on social media.

If your child sees something distressing, it is important that they know where to go to seek help and who they should talk to. They could also contact Childline where a trained counsellor will listen to anything that's worrying them.

The Childline phone number is 0800 1111.

www.nationalonlinesafety.com Twitter: @nationalonsafety Facebook: /NationalOnlineSafety Phone: 0800 368 8061

Further Information & Guidance

[Momo Online Safety Guide for Parents](#)

[Momo – The facts for Parent & Carers](#)