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Dear Parents and Carers

We are sure you are aware of the latest cyberbullying craze that is going around called Momo Challenge, therefore we wanted to give you some information about what this is, the dangers to children and what you can do to help.

What is the Momo Challenge?

The Momo character — the disfigured face attached to a bird's body — was, in fact, a prop named 'Mother Bird' made in Japan three years ago for an art exhibition. Its sinister stretched features make for a disturbing image that could easily upset or worry a younger child. Momo targets young children on social media and mobile phones. After phone users are enticed to contact a user named 'Momo', they receive graphic threats from the user and are instructed to perform a series of dangerous tasks. The doll encourages them to add a contact on the messaging service 'WhatsApp', then hounds them with violent images and dares. It encourages children to self-harm and the ultimate post tells them to take their own lives.

How do children get to know about it?

Children are hearing about the challenge through numerous sources online — the coverage that is happening in the news, and sharing and commentary on social media platforms have created a level of intrigue and curiosity about this game, which is initially light hearted and fun, but can quickly turn into something more dangerous. It's important to remember that the hype around these crazes often leads children to investigate for themselves, even if they haven't had direct contact. Is it something to worry about? Recently, the Momo challenge has been covered extensively in the news and the disfigured avatar has been popping up all over the internet. Our main concern is the upset caused to a child whilst seeing a disturbing image or hears about something that sounds frightening. However, there is no doubt that the Momo phenomenon has reached the UK, so it is something that parents and carers need to be familiar with and ready to talk about with their child.

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What should parents do?

It's important that parents and carers talk to their children about it. The best way to start, is to ask a general question about whether they have seen anything online that upset or worried them. Parents and carers need to follow their child's lead — introducing the idea of the Momo challenge to a child who isn't familiar with it might lead them to investigate. On the other hand, avoiding mentioning it won't provide a chance for a good discussion. Take your child's lead and whatever you decide about overtly talking about Momo, make sure that they know that contacting strangers and doing anything at all that they are asked to do online or off that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable is not OK and they must immediately tell an adult they trust.

What to look out for?

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 parents and carers 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.

Yours sincerely

Jocelyn Hurry
Deputy Headteacher