



St Katherine's School



27 February 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

Safeguarding alert: The Momo Challenge

You may already be aware of an online game called Momo; it has been in the news since August but appears to have resurfaced over the weekend. It is flashing up through Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Fortnite and other social media sites. It is allegedly encouraging children to self-harm and try to kill themselves.

We take the safeguarding of our young people very seriously at St Katherine's and wish to share the following information about this online game.

The Momo Challenge - A factsheet for parents

What is it?

- Coined the "suicide challenge", Momo is a new viral game that encourages players to perform a series of challenges in order to meet 'Mother Bird' - a disfigured character (inspired by Japanese art) with bulging eyes and untidy black hair on a chicken-like body. Light-hearted and fun at the outset, this game experience quickly darkens, absorbing players who are encouraged to perform acts of violence and self-harm through a series of progressively risky challenges. Originating in Mexico, it is easily accessed through social media shares (predominantly Facebook and YouTube) and is rapidly spreading across the world.

Why are we concerned?

- The challenges issued in this game present a serious risk to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people in our schools here in the UK, as does the distressing content when a player refuses to carry on. With worrying similarities to the 'Blue Whale challenge', it has also been linked to at least five cases of childhood suicide.

How does it work?

- Players are encouraged to contact Momo and provide their mobile number.
- They will then receive instructions to perform a series of challenges, via SMS or Whatsapp.
- Player refusal can trigger severely abusive messaging and their mobile device being hacked.
- The final challenge is to commit suicide in order to meet 'Mother Bird'.

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Why are children attracted to this game?

- Sharing and commentary on Social Media platforms has created a level of intrigue and curiosity about this game, which is initially light hearted and fun. Fundamentally, however, this is a game that targets vulnerable children and young people online, as those with mental health issues are more likely to be drawn to the psychological nature of the challenges.

What can you do?

- Carefully monitor your child's online activity
- Parents/carers need to educate/reinforce online safety and in this way encourage children and young people to make the right choice and avoid this game
- Remind your children of the importance of confidently saying "no" to invitations to play games from strangers
- Remind your children that they should not click on unidentified links
- Remind your children to 'block' unknown numbers and friend requests.

Please take time to discuss this issue with your child and continue to monitor and discuss what apps your child is accessing and downloading.

Should you have any safeguarding concerns please contact your child's Head of House. If you wish to report any inappropriate online behaviour please contact the [Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre \(CEOP\)](#).

Yours sincerely



Hayden Southon
Deputy Headteacher