

WH/RNM/MOMO

1st March 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

Over the past few weeks, 'the Momo Challenge' has been covered extensively in the news. It features a disfigured avatar image that has been popping up all over the internet. It is a game played over WhatsApp where participants contact the character Momo and are then told to do a series of challenges, with the final challenge allegedly being suicide. This is obviously a cause for concern, so after a dialogue with the Safeguarding Team at Leeds City Council Children's Services, I thought it appropriate to write to you.

Some tabloid media outlets have claimed that the Momo phenomenon has reached the UK and report that many children have told their parents that they have become afraid of the dark after seeing the upsetting face or that they have been told to harm themselves by Momo. Whether they have actually played the game, been told about it by friends at school, or simply seen the face on the internet, is unclear.

There have other reports of hackers inserting Momo into Fortnite and YouTube videos but the Safeguarding Team understand that there is no evidence that supports this. A lot of the information about the Momo Challenge is concerning, but the number of reported cases of children harming themselves because of the game is extremely low. Media reports allege that Momo is linked to three cases of teens killing themselves in Asia and South America, but there is no evidence that it was the direct cause.

What is clear, however, is that there is not just one Momo WhatsApp user on the internet; there are multiple accounts causing concern. The first recorded Momo profile came from Japan, but several more have since appeared across the world, perhaps suggesting that there a number of people on the internet taking advantage of the situation to draw attention to themselves.

I attach a [document](#) shared by the Safeguarding Team that you might find helpful.

Page 1 of 2

In line with all our online safety advice, we would encourage our families to be vigilant and to do the following

- Ensure you know what your children can access online
- Ensure that children understand the importance of not giving personal information to anyone they do not know
- Repeatedly remind children that no-one has the right to make them do anything they do not want to do
- Use all the available parental controls to keep children safe

The Safeguarding Team advise that the most common behaviours that might be a cause for concern are when children:

- 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 you have concerns about Momo or a specific concern about your child's use of the internet please contact our Safeguarding Officer, Mrs Spink, via Reception and she would be pleased to support you. Alternatively you can use the "Tell Us" button on our webs site, which can be found under the Parents' tab.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CWALSH", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

CHRISTOPHER WALSH
Principal