



28th February 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following recent publicity regarding a new viral 'game' with which young people are increasingly engaging, I would like to share with you some further information regarding this potential internet threat.

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 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 it's on our radar

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.

Although publicised as a 'worldwide phenomenon' since July 2018, so far complaints have been relatively low in number. However, reports on and awareness of the challenge have risen rapidly in February 2019 with online safety agencies publishing warnings following the 'game' being potentially linked to at least five cases of childhood suicide.

How it works

- 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"

Why children like it

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 on line, as those with mental health issues are more likely to be drawn to the psychological nature of the challenges.

What to do

A person doesn't have to be searching Momo themselves to be exposed to it and unlike other games that children enjoy, there is no positive side to this.

School and parents need to educate and reinforce online safety to encourage children to make the right choice and avoid this "game".

- Children need to have the confidence to say no to invitations from strangers to play games, even if the stranger appears to be a child or young person
- Children need to know how to block unknown numbers and requests

We are reiterating with our students the importance of keeping safe online and the key dos and don'ts. Please take time to read the guide attached to ensure that your child is not adversely affected by this challenge.

We will continue to reinforce and educate our students about all aspects of internet safety throughout the year.

Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for additional guidance and extra advice on this issue.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs G Grainger
Headteacher