

ST ANDREW'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

NUTTALL LANE RAMSBOTTOM BURY LANCS BL0 9JD



Headteacher: Mr D Marsh B.A. Hons NPQH
Deputy Headteacher: Mrs T Hamilton B.A. Hons
Assistant Headteacher: Mrs L Barnes MSc
Telephone: 01706 822649
Fax: 01706 829949

28th February 2019

Dear Parents/Carers

You will have heard in the news about The Momo challenge which is the latest in a series of online challenges that emerge and cause enormous concern. Sometimes the challenges are more myth than reality but that doesn't reduce the worry.

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. The Momo challenge is allegedly 'played' over WhatsApp. The Momo character asks would-be participants to contact 'her' and do a series of challenges – the final challenge being suicide. Of course, the evidence for this behaviour happening is limited – there isn't much evidence of a child actually being harmed and what seems to be happening is that the image is spreading because people are using the image in their profiles.

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 on social media is also leading to old fashioned playground curiosity. 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.

Why would children be drawn to it?

There are lots of reasons for children to be drawn towards these challenges even ones that subsequently turn out to be nothing more than urban myth. The drama can be enticing especially when a popular Influencer or gamer is talking about it online.

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. It's important to know that there isn't much evidence of there being harm to children aside from the upset caused when a child sees 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 need to be familiar with and ready to talk about with their child. Children at St Andrew's have started to talk about this phenomenon.

What should parents do?

Although the Momo challenge appears to be more fear than fact, it's important that parents 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 has upset or worried them. Explain that there are often things that happen online that can be misleading or frightening and that some things are designed to get a lot of attention.

Parents 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.

Remember that curiosity is a natural part of growing up so don't blame them for being drawn to this sort of digital drama. Try to listen, keep calm and help them to recognise that however tempting these things may be to explore, it's never sensible to be drawn in.

Parents of younger children may also want to install YouTube Kids, a more controlled version of YouTube intended for families, for better control of what young children may come across online.

In school, children are never allowed to use the internet unsupervised and always on a site set up by the teacher. Any children who bring their mobile phones to school must not use them on school premises. They hand them in at the start of the day and collect them at the end.

If you have any further questions do not hesitate to contact us at school.

Yours sincerely



D Marsh
Headteacher

