



Davington Primary School

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Dear Parents

It has been brought to our attention that some children and parents have been discussing the Momo challenge.

We appreciate that this story has created some anxiety amongst adults (and children and young people who have seen the images) however it's important to recognise that most of the current concerns have been fuelled by the recent publicity. Credible reports about this issue are very rare and due to recent publicity, it is likely that content is now being created and shared on popular social media apps to generate fear and panic.

Viral stories such as this often contain graphic or distressing imagery; we strongly recommend this is not shared with children. It is also important to recognise that by mentioning specific challenges or viral stories by name, we may encourage children to explore something that they were previously unaware of, either out of curiosity, or because they want to feel involved in what everyone is talking about.

Online safety is an important part of keeping children safe at Davington Primary School and is taught to all pupils. Our curriculum empowers children to become critical thinkers and to understand how they can stay safe and behave appropriately online, but we can only be successful in keeping children safe online if we work with you.

Talk to your child

- We would not recommend naming concerning challenges or sharing potentially frightening images specifically with children as this can cause them significant upset and distress.
- It's important that parents find out and learn about what children are doing online; find out what your child is looking at, and judge for yourself if it's appropriate.
- Learning together with your child can often open opportunities to discuss safe behaviour online. By having regular and open conversations with your child, you'll provide them with an opportunity to share any concerns they may have.
- www.childnet.com and www.thinkuknow.co.uk has some useful tips and ideas for parents about starting conversations about online safety

Do your research

- If you are made aware of a concern being shared on social media, it's a good idea to check such stories out with a known reliable and trustworthy source. Many headlines and stories use sensationalist language with vague details; if this is the case then it's possible that it's not entirely accurate. Useful websites that can help determine if an online story is true include:
 - www.thatsnonsense.com
 - www.snopes.com
 - www.truthorfiction.com

Take concerns raised by children seriously

- If your child has been exposed to such content and is scared, then it's important not to dismiss their worries. It doesn't matter if the fear is real or proportionate, if it's scaring them, it's worth listening to them to help them feel reassured and safe.
- Help provide a balanced view to such stories and talk with them about how they can deal with concerns, such as blocking and reporting on websites or apps they use and always talking to a trusted adult if they see something upsetting online.

Understand technology

- Discuss together as a family how the internet will be used in your house and set clear boundaries regarding time-limits, supervision and what they can access.
- Visit sites like www.internetmatters.org and www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/a-parents-guide for advice about parental controls on consoles and devices.
- Make sure you read any parental guidance and safety recommendations (including age requirements – most popular social networking sites and apps are only for users aged 13+, 16+ or 18+); visit www.net-aware.org.uk to find out information about some of the most popular apps.

Report any serious risk of harm

- The School Designated Safeguarding Leads Mrs Davison and I are available to discuss any help you may need or concerns that you may have.
- If you are worried that a criminal offence has been committed, then you can report your concerns to the Police. You can contact Kent Police via 101 or 999 if there is immediate risk or you can report online abuse to CEOP by visiting www.ceop.police.uk and using the "Click CEOP" report button.

For more information access:

- www.thinkuknow.co.uk – Visit the "Parent/Carer" Section and use the "Click CEOP" button to seek advice and report online abuse
- www.childnet.com – Visit the "Parent and Carer" section helpful tools and advice
- www.internetmatters.org – A range of advice and support on issues for parents
- www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety – NSPCC provides information for parents about popular social media sites, apps and games.
- www.saferinternet.org.uk – Parents guides to safety tools on popular devices and signposts report mechanisms for some websites.
- www.kent.police.uk/internetsafety - Guidance from Kent Police

Mobile Phones

In the unlikely event that your child does **need** to bring a mobile phone to school, this must be handed to the office on arrival and collected at the end of the school day. Mobile phones are not to be turned on until the children depart from school grounds. To reassure any concerns raised, mobile phones are not kept in the classroom.


I have attached a leaflet with information from the National Online Safety team which you may find useful. If you should have any further concerns, please contact any member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Yours sincerely,



Mr C Saint
Head teacher

It's important to note that new challenges are arising on the internet all the time. We have created to this guide to raise awareness of the issue and offer advice on helping parents to talk to their children about making safer decisions online. See also our '7 conversation starters' guide for more tips on better communication with your child.



Momo is a sinister 'challenge' that has been around for some time. It has recently resurfaced and once again has come to the attention of schools and children across the country. Dubbed the 'suicide killer game', Momo has been heavily linked with apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and most recently (and most worryingly)... YouTube Kids. The scary doll-like figure reportedly sends graphic violent images, and asks users to partake in dangerous challenges like waking up at random hours and has even been associated with self-harm. It has been reported that the 'Momo' figure was originally created as a sculpture and featured in an art gallery in Tokyo and unrelated to the 'Momo' challenge we are hearing about in the media.

What parents need to know about

MOMO



CHILDREN'S VIDEOS BEING 'HIJACKED'

There have been recent reports that some seemingly innocent videos on YouTube and YouTube Kids (such as 'surprise eggs', unboxing videos and Minecraft videos) have been edited by unknown sources to include violence provoking and/or other inappropriate content. Even though YouTube monitor and remove videos that include inappropriate content, clips can be uploaded and viewed thousands of times before they get reported and removed. As a parent, it's difficult to spot these videos as the harmful content doesn't appear until partway through the video.

DISTRESSING FOR CHILDREN

Popular YouTubers and other accounts have been uploading reaction videos, showing their experience of the MOMO challenge. Some of the videos include a disclosure message warning that the content may be "inappropriate or offensive to some audiences" and that "viewer discretion is advised" but these videos are still easily accessed by clicking 'I understand and wish to proceed'. The image of the 'Momo' character can be deeply distressing to children and young people and it's important to note that it may slip through parental settings and filters.

SUGGESTED VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

Video apps such as YouTube include an 'up next' feature which automatically starts playing another video based on the video just watched. Due to YouTube's algorithm, users are shown 'suggested videos' that they may be interested in. The thumbnails used on suggested videos are purposefully created in a way to encourage viewers to click them. During our research, we found that when watching one Momo related video, we were shown countless other Momo themed videos and other scary content which would be age-inappropriate for children under 18.



National
Online
Safety

Top Tips for Parents

TELL THEM IT'S NOT REAL

Just like any urban legend or horror story, the concept can be quite frightening and distressing for young people. Whilst this may seem obvious, it's important for you to reiterate to your child that Momo is not a real person and cannot directly harm them! Also, tell your child to not go openly searching for this content online as it may only cause more distress.

BE PRESENT

It's important for you, as a parent or carer, to be present while your children are online. This will give you a greater understanding of what they are doing on their devices, as well as providing you with the opportunity to discuss, support and stop certain activities that your child may be involved in. As the nature of each task become progressively worse it's also important to recognise any changes in your child's behaviour.

TALK REGULARLY WITH YOUR CHILD

As well as monitoring your child's activity, it's important for you discuss it with them too. Not only will this give you an understanding of their online actions, but those honest and frequent conversations will encourage your child to feel confident to discuss issues and concerns they may have related to the online world.

DEVICE SETTINGS & PARENTAL CONTROLS

Ensure that you set up parental controls for your devices at home. This will help to restrict the types of content that your child can view, as well as help you to monitor their activity. In addition to this, it's vital that you are aware of your device and account settings to ensure your child's utmost safety. For example, on YouTube you can turn off 'suggested auto-play' on videos to stop your child from viewing content that they have not directly selected.

PEER PRESSURE

Trends and viral challenges can be tempting for children to take part in; no matter how dangerous or scary they seem. Make sure you talk to your child about how they shouldn't succumb to peer pressure and do anything they are not comfortable with, online or offline. If they are unsure, encourage them to talk to you or another trusted adult.

REAL OR HOAX?

As a parent it is natural to feel worried about certain things you see online that may be harmful to your child. However, not everything you see online is true. Check the validity of the source and be mindful of what you share as it may only cause more worry.

REPORT & BLOCK

You can't always rely on parental controls to block distressing or harmful material. People find ways around a platform's algorithm in order to share and promote this type of material. Due to this, we advise that you flag and report any material you deem to be inappropriate or harmful as soon as you come across it. You should also block the account/content to prevent your child from viewing it. Also encourage your child to record/screenshot any content they feel could be malicious to provide evidence in order to escalate the issue to the appropriate channels.

FURTHER SUPPORT

Speak to the safeguarding lead within your child's school should you have any concerns regarding your child's online activity or malicious content that could affect them.

If your child sees something distressing, it is important that they know where to go to seek help and who their trusted adults are. They could also contact Childline where a trained counsellor will listen to anything that's worrying them.

The Childline phone number is
0800 1111.

SOURCES
<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/momo-suicide-killer-game-14552196>
<http://www.BBC.co.uk>
<http://www.BBC.co.uk/news/uk-education-2017-09-22>

