



## NEWCASTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY UNIT

### E-Safety Warning

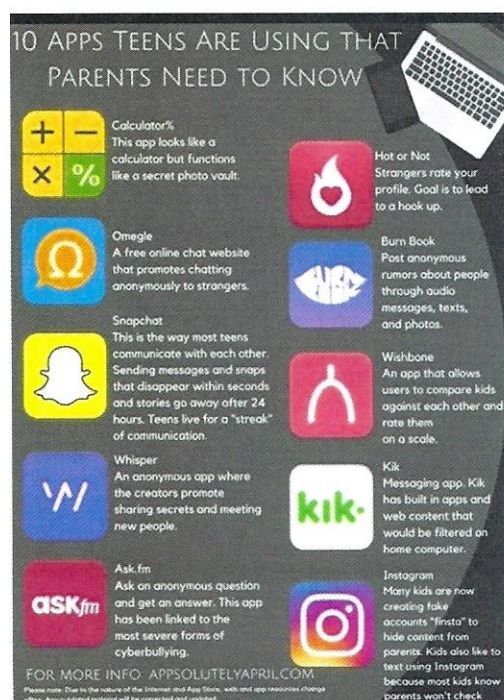
Dear Parents,

It has come to our attention that there is an e-safety risk that has arisen on many online platforms that your child may be familiar with, including those considered quite child friendly such as 'YouTube Kids'. You may have already heard from the media about the dangers of MOMO, an online craze that encourages children or vulnerable others to participate in challenges that get progressively harder and can lead to self-harm and even suicide. Please see some of the attachments on the back and at the bottom of this letter with some advice that we have found from our own online research including advice from the PSNI. We urge you to show vigilance towards your child's use of the internet and to monitor communication links very closely. In school we have discussed this topic with P5 to P7 children with the message that they should report any experiences of MOMO that they encounter. We have chosen not to show the children any associated pictures due to the horrifying nature of the images. Please continue this conversation at home and encourage open and healthy dialogue about your child's online activity.

We really appreciate your support with this matter and encourage you to make contact with the Safeguarding Team should you require any further advice or guidance about this very important issue.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J McCann



Police Service of Northern Ireland

Sunday at 03:28

**\*\*Suicide game targeting our kids\*\***

Some information on the latest "Momo" game which is doing the rounds at the moment 🙄

This game conceals itself within other harmless looking games played by our kids! There has also been reports of parts of the game being viewable on YouTube

The character in the photo below is 'Momo' and when downloaded tells your child to communicate with them via WhatsApp and a number of other widely used apps. "Momo" then tells your child to self harm or she will put a curse on them!

Our advice as always, is to supervise the games your kids play and be extremely mindful of the videos they are watching on YouTube. Ensure that the devices they have access to are restricted to age suitable content.

WJ

# The Momo Challenge – A Factsheet For Parents

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## What It Is

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 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.

With worrying similarities to the 'Blue Whale challenge', it has also been linked to at least five cases of childhood suicide.

## The Low Down

- 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 online, 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 for Momo themselves to be exposed to it and, unlike other games that children enjoy, there is no positive side to this.

Teachers and parents need to educate/reinforce online safety, and in this way encourage children and young people to make the right choice and avoid this game:

- The importance of confidently saying "no" to invitations to play games from strangers
- Knowing why they should not click on unidentified links.
- Knowing how to 'block' unknown numbers and friend requests.