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School**

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*Headteacher: Kathy Pacey NPQH*

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Dear Families

You may be aware of the 'Momo challenge', which has been in the news recently. The supposed latest internet trend, reportedly linked to child suicides and self-harm, has been dismissed as a hoax, but students and parents are still, understandably, concerned. Whilst the challenge itself is a hoax, students have been talking about it and I wanted to provide clarity for you, in order for you to discuss the topic clearly at home.

### **What is Momo?**

Momo is an image of a scary, doll-like puppet. It has been reported that anonymous individuals are adding children and young people on Facebook and WhatsApp (an instant messaging service), using the image of Momo as an avatar; the user then encourages young people to do challenges, some of which can be dangerous or frightening, and tells them not to tell other members of their family what's happening; the image has apparently also been spliced into YouTube videos, such as those about Peppa Pig or Mickey Mouse.

### **It's a hoax**

At the moment there's only anecdotal evidence, and no reports from official sources that the 'Momo challenge' has led to children harming themselves. Police have not reported any instances of children harming themselves due to the 'Momo challenge'; the Samaritans said it was *'not aware of any verified evidence in this country or beyond' that it's linked to self-harm.*

A YouTube spokesperson also told the Guardian that it *'had not received any evidence of videos showing or promoting the Momo challenge on YouTube'*. The ensuing media coverage may, however, be harmful and frightening to young people.

### **Where did it come from?**

The image itself is a sculpture that originally featured in a Japanese gallery, and has nothing to do with the current 'Momo challenge'. The 'Momo challenge' originally gained attention in July last year, and resurfaced this month when a Facebook post from a concerned parent went viral (it was shared thousands of times). It's since been covered by several news outlets.

### **What you can do as a parent?**

Don't panic. The 'Momo challenge' itself is unlikely to pose an immediate risk to pupils' health, but...

- Be aware that the image, and surrounding media coverage, might still be frightening to children;
- Report directly to the social media platform itself if you see anything to do with Momo, and don't forward it on anywhere;





- Use this opportunity to remind your child about online safety. Individuals or groups may jump on the bandwagon and create their own versions of the 'Momo challenge' as pranks. Remind your child to speak to a trusted adult if they see anything unsettling online

Attached is a further fact sheet about safer use of YouTube. If you have any further questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me at the school.

Yours faithfully

Miss N Harrison  
Senior Pastoral Manager