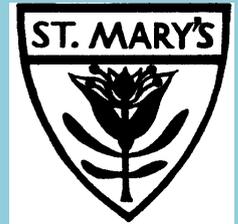| Mr. J. Shingler BA (Hons), PGCE, NPQH Head Teacher — Archdiocese of Birmingham	St. Mary's Catholic Primary School	ST. MARY'S

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God is at the centre of our lives and as a school community we try to grow in love and care by following the example of Jesus

27th February 2019

Dear Parents

Recently there has been some discussion amongst the children about 'Momo' infiltrating the accounts which a few of the children have been using. The 'Momo' hack is a widespread phenomenon and other Head teachers in Staffordshire have expressed concern at the numbers of children experiencing distress as a result of this. I am not an expert in this field but the following article which I came across offers clear explanations and advice which I can follow as a parent.

I hope that it is of use to those who have been affected.

Best wishes

Mr Shingler

Momo may be creepy, but police believe it is clear it is being used by hackers *to harvest information.*

Momo targets young children on social media. The doll encourages them to add a contact on messaging service WhatsApp, then hounds them with violent images and dares. It encourages them to self-harm and the ultimate post tells them to take their own lives.

But police said that while headlines like "suicide game hits UK" might get thousands of clicks online, they "miss the bigger issue". A police officer said Momo was clearly run by hackers who are looking for information. "Whatever or whoever is behind it, there is no disputing the content being sent is horrendous," reads the post.

"A 'curse contact' sends a number and tells you to contact them on WhatsApp.

"One video of such an interaction in America I've seen, shows an ominous-sounding voice recording being sent to a child telling them to take a knife to their own throat. Another threatens family if a 'challenge' is not completed. It's chilling viewing. There are numerous variations and of course now imitators."

Police said the danger lay with children feeling pressured to either follow the orders on any app by carrying out "challenges", or because of peer pressure in chat rooms.

"This is merely a current, attention-grabbing example of the minefield that is online communication for kids," said a police spokesman.

"In 2017, it was 'Blue Whale', now it's 'Momo'. There'll be something else next."

Police have appealed to parents to not simply focus on Momo, urging them to:

- **Ensure they know what their children can access online**

- **Ensure children understand the importance of not giving personal information to anyone they do not know**

- **Tell their children no-one has the right to make them do anything they do not want to do**

- **Use parental controls to keep children safe**

A spokesperson for the NSPCC said: "The constantly evolving digital world means a steady influx of new apps and games and can be hard for parents to keep track of. That's why it's important for parents to talk regularly with children about these apps and games and the potential risks they can be exposed to. The NSPCC publishes advice and guidance for parents on discussing online safety with their children, as well as Net Aware - the UK's only parental guide to social media and gaming apps."

Among the most common signs to watch out for include children who:

- **Become very secretive, especially about what they are doing online**

- **Are spending a lot of time on the internet and social media**

- **Are switching screens on their device when approached**

- **Are withdrawn or angry after using the internet or sending text messages**

- **Have lots of new phone numbers or email addresses on their devices**

If adults are concerned or have any questions on how to approach the subject with their children, they can contact the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or **visit the NSPCC website**.