

E-safety March update

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Fake news (false stories): What is it? Why is it a problem? How do I spot it?

These are some of the questions being asked at the moment in the media and as a result social media companies are being urged to tackle this problem. Fake news can be dangerous and influential and I hope to point out some realistic steps which may help you and your child interpret what you see online in the future.

A recent example of false stories or fake news is the MOMO challenge. Last week this quickly spread across the media and particularly through social media. Many organisations believing this to be true offered advice on how to deal with the creepy character and the stories that were being shared of children harming themselves at its request. This is clearly disturbing for a parent as we want to do everything in our power to protect our children. So the fact that a false story can be spread in this way creating panic is quite distressing.

After a day or two of this story spreading, raising the profile of this character, it was then reported that, "there was no verified evidence of this challenge causing harm to children." More and more children have searched for and shared the character's image since it appeared in the media with many choosing to use the character as their profile picture. This in turn can be frightening for small children who come into contact with the image. The increased news coverage also encouraged parents to talk to their children about the character and warn their children of the challenge. In one respect this is positive communication about online activity but on the flip side it is also exposing children to a risk which was not actually real.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/feb/28/schools-police-and-media-told-to-stop-promoting-momo-hoax>

My quick steps on how to deal with fake news:

- Is the source of the news well known?
- Is it an official website?
- Can you verify the news against other reliable sources?
- Is it asking you to enter any information or click links? (Sometimes phishing for personal details)
- Does the article contain sources of information? Are they credible? What is the date on them?
- Where have you accessed the information from? (Was it through social media share or a direct feed?)
- Is it believable? – Trust your instincts and if in doubt always double check.

Please continue to communicate with your children about their use of online technology. Keep dialogue open and encourage regular conversation about what they are seeing and doing online. This could include watching videos together or offering advice on what to do if something like this does happen.

As always if you have any questions or concerns regarding E-safety please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

H. Hutchins

Mrs Hutchins

E-Safety Lead