Online challenges and peer pressure

The internet is full of great content to engage and educate young people. Challenges online are popular among young people and some challenges, such as the ASL Ice Bucket Challenge and the No Makeup Selfie, can promote and raise money for great causes. However some of these challenges aren't for a good cause, challenges such as momo and 'pain challenges' and can harm young people. All children and parents need to be ready to deal with such challenges, whether they are rumoured or real.

In all instances, advice from cyber security experts is the same: be careful about anyone that might add you or children you are responsible for on WhatsApp.

"Adding someone on WhatsApp may seem harmless or even fun at first but it can be very damaging in the future once they are a 'contact', especially if this new connection then asks you to act out something you usually would not feel comfortable in participating in,"

Parents should also be aware of the age restrictions on the commonly used apps. WhatsApp have a new age limit of 16 for users based in Europe.

https://www.childnet.com/blog/age-restrictions-on-social-media-services

While Facebook remains at 13.

This means that these are apps which our primary pupils should not be accessing.

Talking about peer pressure

One of the key issues raised over online challenges is that of peer pressure. Young people can sometimes be drawn into these challenges because it is what all their friends are doing and saying 'no' can seem like a very hard thing to do.

Advice for parents

The internet is constantly changing, and new issues, challenges and online platforms are arising all the time. We would advise parents and carers to **have an open and honest conversation** with their children. Ask your children about what they're seeing online and be prepared to talk about some difficult topics such as self-harm, suicide and negative influences online. The NSPCC has some great advice for when you need to **talk about difficult topics.**
It's important that your children feel that they are able to come and talk to you about any issues they may be having online. Although it may seem difficult to have this

conversation, we have some **conversation starters that can help you to start a discussion with your family about their time online**.

Other things to consider to keep your child safe online are:

- Age restrictions: Think about the age restrictions on the sites your family use. Common Sense Media and Net Aware are great sites to see what other parents think of the age ratings on different platforms so that you can make an informed decision about whether your family should be using them. Our social media guides gives an in depth look at the age requirements and safety features on popular social media sites.
- Privacy setting: Most social networking sites have privacy settings to help you manage the content you share and who you share it with; you can decide if you want your posts to be shared with your online friends and followers only or with the public. You can also decide who can contact you on sites you use within the privacy settings.
- Block and report: Make sure you child knows that they can block or report any user that makes them feel uncomfortable online.

Police Scotland

Police Scotland issued the following advice.

Across Scotland there has been some concern about the 'Momo' challenge appearing across social media channels. The character attempts to torment and horrify the young people who watch it and has been circulating the internet for a number of years.

Parents will naturally be concerned but we would urge you to not panic and simply take this as a chance to re-educate any young person you know about the dangers of staying safe online.

Chief Inspector Scott Tees of Safer Communities said: "The existence of online challenges such as 'Momo' are clearly a matter for concern for parents however these type of so-called challenges appear every few months on the Internet and we have certainly seen countless other examples over the years.

"We would encourage parents not to panic but instead sit down with their children and talk about all aspects of their online world and explain the potential dangers. Lots of online safety tips, advice and resources to help children and young people stay safe online are available on the CEOP ThinkuKnow website - https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/"

You can also always block or report users and videos on social networking sites if you do come across the image and are concerned.

If you would like to further information on staying safe on line please see:

Thinkuknow

Thinkuknow is the education programme from NCA-CEOP, a UK organisation which protects children both online and offline.

https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

Also the Netaware is a simple no-nonsense guide for parents from NSPCC and O2 to the social media, apps and games that kids use

https://www.net-aware.org.uk

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