

Professional Curiosity Scenarios Reveal

Scenario 2

A 7-year-old child has recently become withdrawn and quiet in class. They often complain of stomach aches and ask to go home early. Lunchbox is frequently empty or contains very little food. The child has mentioned looking after a younger sibling at night while the parent “sleeps a lot.” The family has had recent contact with the school regarding missed homework and reduced parent engagement.

What information do you need?

- When did the change in behaviour (withdrawn, physical complaints) begin?
- How often is the child asking to go home or reporting stomach aches?
- What does the child say about their responsibilities at home?
- Is the child regularly supervising the younger sibling, especially overnight?
- Is the child getting adequate sleep?
- What is the parent’s explanation for reduced engagement with school?
- Are there any known health concerns affecting the parent (e.g. mental health, substance use, chronic illness)?
- Are basic needs consistently being met (food, supervision, emotional support)?
- Are there patterns in attendance, lateness, or specific days of concern?
- What is the presentation of the younger sibling?

Who else may hold information?

- Class teacher and pastoral/safeguarding leads in school
- School nurse
- GP or primary healthcare services
- Early Help or family support workers
- Social care (current or historical involvement)
- Nursery/school attended by the younger sibling
- Housing services (if any ongoing concerns)
- Voluntary or community organisations supporting the family
- **Police (if any history of welfare checks or incidents)**

What assumptions might you be making?

- That stomach aches are purely medical rather than linked to anxiety or stress
- That the child’s caring role is minor or age-appropriate
- That reduced parental engagement is due to disinterest rather than difficulty or crisis
- That the parent “sleeping a lot” is harmless without exploring possible causes
- That the situation is temporary and will resolve without intervention
- That because the child is still attending school, risks are lower
- That one agency will already be addressing concerns