

Attendance phone call scripts

The following phone call scripts have been developed to help schools communicate with parents about attendance so they can:

- Understand the reason for absence
- Listen to the parent/carer
- Offer support
- Be clear on next steps

Where absence is a concern, the parent/carer should be made aware of their child's attendance level and why it is a concern.

Before the call (quick checks):

- Understand pupil's current attendance level and pattern
- Is pupil attached to a key worker/support staff member who may know their specific circumstances or engages with the family directly.
- Whether there is a reason that you would not contact family.

Considerations when asking questions:

- Be aware of how you ask questions and whether your tone sounds interrogatory, official or judgemental. Ensure your tone is friendly, curious, and supportive.
- Be approachable, encourage open conversations and create a safe space for discussion. This helps parents to see that sharing information is helpful to them and their child.
- Be sensitive and use words that show empathy and understanding to validate what the parent/carer is telling you.
- Be honest. If the reason for absence is not something you can authorise, say so. If the absence is a concern, explain why and ask how you can help.

Stage 1: Early intervention

Use for initial conversations

Opening

- *Good morning/afternoon, it's [name] from [school].
I noticed that [child's name] is absent today / has been absent recently, and I just wanted to check how they are. Is now a good time to talk?*

Explore and listen

- Let the parent explain. If unclear or vague, gently explore:
 - *"Is there something specific making them unwell or worried?"*
 - *"Has this come on suddenly or been building over time?"*
 - *"Is there anything happening that might be making school difficult?"*

Clarify and respond

- If clear why they are absent, explain if it will be authorised (be honest if not).
- Where support is appropriate, does the parent have ideas on how you can help
 - *"Is there anything we can do to support [child's name] or help them return to school?" (Adapt based on response—flexibility, check-ins, pastoral support, etc.)*

Agree next steps

- Confirm expected return: *"When do you think [child's name] will be back with us?"*
- Reinforce expectation positively: *"We'd really like to see them back as soon as possible."*
- Add a positive comment where appropriate: *"They were really engaged in [lesson/area] last week."*

Close

- *"Thank you for your time—please do get in touch if anything changes or if you need any help."*

Stage 2: Continued Absence

Use when there is a pattern of absence or prior contact has already been made.

Opening (acknowledges prior contact)

- *Good morning/afternoon, it's [name] from [school].
I'm calling again about [child's name]'s attendance, as we've noticed continued absences and wanted to check in with you.*

Explain concern (be specific and factual)

- *"[Child's name] has missed [X days] over the past [X weeks], which is higher than expected."*

- *We know they've been unwell/worried/away recently and wanted to check in to see how we can work together to make sure (Child's first name) is in school as much as possible, enjoys their time and achieves their best.*

Explore underlying reasons (build on earlier conversations)

- Question prompts:
 - *"When do you think [child's name] will be back in school?"*
 - *"Could they come in and we monitor how they feel?"*
 - *"Can you talk me through what's been happening recently?"*
 - *"What do you feel is the main thing stopping them attending?"*
 - *"What have you already tried, and has anything helped?"*
 - *Have you sought medical advice or plan to?*

Offer support and set expectations

- *"Is there something specific we can put in place to help?"*
- *"If attendance doesn't improve, we may need to consider further steps, but we'd much rather work together to avoid that."*

Listen to parent response and agree next steps if additional support is needed.

- *"We want to work with you to improve attendance and make sure [child's name] feels able to come to school."*

Close

We look forward to seeing [Child] [tomorrow/as soon as possible]."

Thank you for working with us on this—please contact us if anything changes or you need any help."