

Hungry Irish children



An unknown but significant number of Irish children are arriving at school each day with no food in their stomachs.

Thousands of young children are experiencing their first taste of school this week and bon voyage and good luck to them all as they embark on their great journey.

But, amid all the shiny faces and new uniforms, there is a horrible scandal because more than a few of those youngsters are arriving at the school gates each morning with little or nothing in their stomachs.

This is not one of those exaggerated or vague claims. A 'Lost Education' study polled more than 500 Irish primary and secondary school teachers last month and more than 39 per cent said they had taken food into school for a child who was regularly hungry.

Some 19 per cent said they saw children arrive hungry for lessons every day while almost one in three teachers said they had seen children fall asleep in the classroom due to a lack of food.

The study was commissioned by the Kellogg's cereals company to mark a partnership with the children's charity, Barnardos. Kellogg's will help the charity to provide breakfast to children attending its services and those attending Barnardos' breakfast clubs in schools.

Crosscare, the social support agency based in Dublin, says more than a quarter of children under 18 in Ireland live below the poverty line.

It is 2014 and Irish children are going to school suffering the empty and aching pangs of hunger.

Hunger is an invisible condition but it still hurts and has serious consequences down the line. Shame on us all for letting such a situation persist.

Incidentally, while it doesn't excuse anything, we are not the only so-called affluent country with such a problem. At present, it is estimated that one in five children in the United States struggles with hunger.