

15th April 2020.

Dear Sir,

Edmund Rice Schools Trust, one of Ireland's largest networks of schools, with 96 schools around the country, is concerned about the difficulty that continued isolation and reliance on remote learning and studying could pose for vulnerable and disadvantaged students particularly.

While teachers are doing their utmost to keep students motivated and connected, the reality is that some students could just find it very difficult over an extended period. Our network has been holding regular conference calls since the Covid-19 lockdown and every school has a considered plan in place to work with all students, but particularly those who are most vulnerable.

This is a stressful time for all students. However, we are very aware in our schools that some students are facing additional barriers to extended remote learning. They may have special educational needs. They may be living in crowded accommodation. They may not have access to technology. They may not live in supportive environments. We have quite a number of students also living in emergency accommodation or direct provision. The plight of these students must be a priority.

For these students, the connection with schools is so much more than just learning and exams. School can be a lifeline for them. Our schools are doing everything they can to ensure that our most disadvantaged students know that our teachers and schools are there for them.

Yours sincerely,

Gerry Bennett
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