

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 MAY 2010

Statement from: Cllr P A Robinson, Deputy Leader and Executive Councillor for Community Safety and Social Cohesion.

SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Our Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service (EMAS) is primarily concerned with providing English training for children whose command of the language is insufficient to allow them to benefit from the education provided in Lincolnshire Schools. The challenge posed by ethnic minority children in our schools has risen sharply in the last 10 years, both in overall numbers and the spread of countries from which they come. In positive terms, the cultural diversity introduced into our county by Chinese, Portuguese, Arabic, Polish and Tamil speaking families has been timely, as the globalisation of trade, employment and tourism has gathered pace.

EMAS has taken on the strategic management and development of “supplementary schools” across Lincolnshire. Supplementary schools are voluntary organisations which meet in the evenings and weekends to provide an opportunity for both ethnic minority children (and, to a lesser extent, adults) to learn more of their native languages and culture. Across the UK there are some 5000 such schools. In Lincoln, for example, the Chinese School (St Peter & St Paul) is a Sunday school which has been going for nine years and attracts young members of the Chinese community aged between five and fifteen. In addition to the Chinese schools there are now supplementary schools in Lincolnshire for Polish, Arabic, Portuguese and Tamil communities.

On 27 April a celebration of the work of Lincolnshire’s supplementary schools was held at Bishop Grosseteste College with cultural displays by the children, and the presentation of national Management Certificates. The certificates are recognition that a school has a sound administrative base on which to work, and reflects great credit on the efforts of the volunteer staff.

ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL) TRAINING FOR MIGRANT WORKERS IN LINCOLNSHIRE’S FOOD INDUSTRY

With Marcus Coleman I visited the Holbeach Campus of Lincoln University for a briefing on the work of the unit in general, and specifically about the ESOL training which they provide for many of the food industry plants across the county. I was told that the continuing severe recessions in the economies of Eastern European countries has meant that there is much less turnover in migrant workers in our food industry and that therefore in some plants 80% of staff come from these areas of Europe. Rather than returning home, many migrants are bringing their families to Lincolnshire and building careers here, progressing up the management chain in their places of work. Firms are benefitting from the reduced need to train a constantly changing workforce, but at the same time, it is becoming increasingly important that non-native English speakers have sufficient command of the language to understand, meet and supervise others in meeting health and safety and food safety regulations.

Staffs from the Holbeach Campus are directly involved with major food firms in the ESOL training of staff, and our Council is contributing towards the cost of this activity – on the

grounds that it is supporting the main industry in the county, and enhancing social cohesion in our communities. This is an important element of the fast changing demography of Lincolnshire,