



HELLO OKAYA

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This newsletter is distributed four times a year by the Okaya International Exchange Association, with the aim of providing local foreign residents with information necessary for daily life, as well as insight into aspects of Japanese culture. Please feel free to contact us with your feedback or any questions you may have.

Education in Japan

What is the education system like in your country? The Japanese education system is based on the 6, 3, 3, 4 system: 6 years of elementary school, 3 years of junior high school, 3 years of senior high school, and 4 years of university (or two years of junior college). Of these, the nine years of education at elementary and junior high schools are compulsory, with senior high school and university requiring screening tests to be able to enter. In addition to these types of schools, vocational training schools that teach specialist skills or occupations are also options for those who have graduated from junior or senior high school.

For preschool aged children, there are also nursery schools that provide day care services to families where guardians cannot provide care for their children in their own home due to work or illness, as well as kindergartens which cater to children aged 3 and upwards. Most preschool-aged children in Japan attend either nursery school or kindergarten, which are important places for learning language and fostering intercommunication skills.

So what do children of foreign nationality living in Japan do as far as education goes?

Just as with Japanese children, children with foreign nationality are also guaranteed the right to receive education here in Japan. That being said, even though they are guaranteed the right, they face many hurdles when it comes to accessing education. Needless to say, many of these children are born overseas, and find themselves suddenly experiencing a 'different culture' after arrival in Japan.

As many of these children do not understand the Japanese language, it is hard for them to receive education according to their own age level. However, as children learn and grow quickly, it is important for them to be children of foreign nationality to be immersed in the Japanese education system as early as possible. Ideally your child should be exposed to the Japanese group life from kindergarten or nursery school, and have a have them learn the language and culture.



It is important to take into consideration your child's future, so that once they have graduated elementary school and junior high school they are able to smoothly enter high school.

There are a number of children with foreign nationality attending elementary and junior high schools in Okaya City. Once they start attending, a substantial part of their day is spent at school. Of course, lessons are conducted entirely in Japanese, and all children are required to take the same classes irrespective of nationality. Both students and teachers feel it is important to resolve any language issues from early on. While it may be hard for children to adjust, the teachers are dedicated to helping foreign students get used to school life as soon as possible. In this age of globalization, it is a good experience for the Japanese students to meet and study together with children of other nationalities, and perhaps school is the place where children most naturally come to understand each other.

Let's help to empower these children so that they can live a comfortable life here in the country that they will most likely reside in the future.

Japanese Winter Traditions ~One Point Japanese Culture~

Ten Calendar signs and the Twelves signs of the Zodiac 十干十二支 *Jikkan-jūnishi*

Jikkan-jūnishi are a method of placing order on time and space and were created in ancient China. The ten signs called *jikkan* and the twelve signs called *jūnishi*, independently or in combination, express dates, years, months, times and directions. The combination of *jikkan* and *jūnishi* is also called the sexagenary cycle (*eto*), but now the term *eto* chiefly refers only to the *jūnishi*, the signs of which

correspond to twelve kinds of animals-rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, serpent, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar. Saying "I was born in the year of the rat," expresses ones age, and the animals expressing that year can be seen on New Years cards. Moreover, when one turns 60, there is a custom of celebrating it as *Kanreki*, because the combination of *jikkan*, on the decimal scale, and *jūnishi*, on the duodecimal scale, complete a full cycle and return to the original combination of the year when one was born.



Crossing of the Gods 御神渡り *Omiwatari*

Omiwatari refers to the pressure ridge in the ice that forms on the surface of Lake Suwa. In winter, when the temperature drops the entire surface of the lake freezes, and if the cold weather continues for several days the ice thickness increases. A difference in temperature between day and night ice causes the ice to expand and contract repeatedly. When this occurs you hear an almighty sound as the ice cracks from the south to north shores, forming a pressure ridge. *Omiwatari*, a natural phenomenon that has been seen repeatedly on the freezing cold Lake Suwa ever since it was formed, is said to occur along the path



where the god Tatemakata-no Mikoto of the Suwa Shrine's upper shrine crossed the lake to reach his love, the goddess Yasakata-no Mikoto of the lower shrine.

The eve of the first day of Spring 節分 *Setsubun*

Setsubun actually signifies "the parting of the seasons," especially nowadays it falls on about February 3rd, the day before the first day of spring. On the evening of this day, people yell, "Out with the ogre! In with happiness!" while scattering parched soybeans inside and outside their homes. To pray for good health for that year, there is also the custom of eating only the same number of soybeans as one's age. While parched soybeans have traditionally been used, nowadays however, some places provide peanuts still with the skins on, not only to make it easier to clean up afterwards, but also so that people can pick them up and eat them. At temples and shrines, too, bean scattering is practiced on a grand scale, and during this season, many nursery, elementary and junior high schools serve dishes made with beans for lunch.





Education



Do you know what kind of day care and educational facilities are located here in Okaya? Here we give you a brief overview of the various kinds of facilities.

☆Kindergarten *Yochien* ☆

There are four kindergartens located here in Okaya City. Kindergartens are a type of school to educate pre-school aged children, and are established under the Japanese School Education Law.

Name of Kindergarten	Address	Telephone Number	Capacity
Yakobu Yochien	262-2 Uenohara, Okaya City	22-2618	280
Seibo Yochien	2-3-26 Daiei-Cho, Okaya City	22-5090	150
Mizuho Yochien	1-8-13 Chuo-Cho, Okaya City	22-3806	105
Tachibana Yochien	2-10-5 Osachi Kohagi, Okaya City	27-6585	105
Total			640



There are no public kindergartens in Okaya. To apply, please contact the respective kindergarten directly.

☆Nursery School *Hoikuen* ☆

There are a total of 16 nursery schools in Okaya City, 14 public, and 2 privately run schools. Different to kindergarten, nursery schools are not educational establishments, but are a type of child welfare facility that provides day care to children whose parents are unable to provide care in their own home, due to employment, illness or other such reasons. Most children enter nursery school from the age of three, leaving their parents to experience group life for the first time. Of course, there are also those nursery schools that provide care to children under three years old. Most children attend the nursery school closest to their own home; however, parents are able to have their child attend one in a different area, depending on whether they need day care for an under-3 year old and after hours day care services.

Name of Nursery School	Enrolment Limit	Day care for Under 3-Year olds	After hours services	Hours of Operation	Name of Nursery School	Enrolment Limit	Day care for Under 3-Year olds	After hours services	Hours of Operation
Oguchi Hoikuen	110	From six months old	Yes	7:30-19:30	Wakagusa Hoikuen	90	Not Provided	No	8:00-16:00
Imai Hoikuen	90	From one year old	Yes	7:30-19:30	Nishibori Hoikuen	120	From one year old	Yes	7:30-19:30
Ayame Hoikuen	120	From six months old	Yes	7:30-19:30	Higashibori Hoikuen	150	Not provided	No	8:00-16:00
Kawagishi Hoikuen	90	From one year old	Yes	7:30-19:30	Shinmei Hoikuen	120	From one year old	Yes	7:30-19:30
Natsuake Hoikuen	60	Not Provided	No	8:00-16:00	Yokokawa Hoikuen	90	From one year old	Yes	7:30-19:30
Narita Hoikuen	90	From six months old	Yes	7:30-19:30	Tsurumine Hoikuen	90	Not provided	Yes	8:00-16:00
Minato Hoikuen	90	From six months old	Yes	7:30-19:30	St. Joseph Hoikuen (Private)	110	From end of maternity leave	Yes	7:30-19:30
Osachi Hoikuen	150	From six months old	Yes	7:30-19:30	Himawari Hoikuen (Private)	60	From end of maternity leave	Yes	7:00-19:30

① Day Care Fees

As fees for day care services are determined by the municipality based on a legal guardian's household income for the previous year, and liability for citizen tax, income tax and other such taxes, the actual fee paid will vary from family to family.

■ Monthly day care charges are reduced when a family has more than one child enrolled in nursery school at the same time. When two siblings are enrolled, day care fees are half price for the second child. When a third child enters nursery school, the second child is half price, and the third child is free.

■ Monthly day care fees for a third or additional child are discounted.

For families who have more than three children under the age of 18 and who **are not** liable for income tax, childcare is provided for free for a third or additional child, even if their children are not enrolled at the same time.

For families with more than three children under the age of 18 years **are** liable for income taxes, child care is provided at 10% of the regular day care fee for a third or additional child over the age of 3, even if their children are not enrolled at the same time.

② Procedures for entering Nursery School

Every year in mid October, an explanatory meeting regarding April entrance to nursery school is held at each of the nursery schools in the city, with applications being accepted at the end of the same month.

■ Applications for entrance to nursery school part way through the year are accepted on an as needed basis, and enquiries should be directed to the staff in charge of child care services at the Okaya City Child Affairs Division. Please note that you may not be able to enter the nursery school of choice if it is already at maximum capacity.

■ Children eligible to enter nursery school are those whose parents or relative under 60 years old and living in the same household meet one of the 'Criteria for Entering Nursery School' and who cannot provide care for the child themselves

■ Children born before April 1st 2005 are classified as 'over 3 year olds,' and those who fall under the 'Under 3 years old' are those who were born after April 2nd 2005. Even so, even if your child has a birthday during the year, they will be divided in the same way.

■ For details, please enquire at the Okaya City Child Affairs Division, Day Care Section
Tel 0266-23-4811 (2F City Hall)

③ After Hours Day Care Services

Parents and guardians who must go to work early or work late, have the option of using the after hours day care services.

However, for those who chose to take advantage of after hours day care services, other monthly expenses must be paid in addition to regular day care fees.

Application for after hours day care services should be made well in advance of the desired date. If you apply without sufficient notice, a day care worker may not be able to be arranged in time, or after hours day care services may not be available on that particular day.

If you fall behind in your payment for after hours day care, nursery schools will cease providing these services. You will not be able to use such services again until payment has been made.



☆ Elementary School/Junior High School☆

① Okaya City Elementary and Junior High Schools

There are eight elementary schools and four junior highs schools in Okaya City. Elementary schools are institutions where children aged 7 to 12 years old between April 2nd and April 1st of the following year can study. Junior high schools are for students aged 13 to 15 years old between the same period. The six years at elementary school and three years at junior high school make up Japan's compulsory education and are provided by municipal authorities.



② Entrance to Elementary School

In order for children who do not have Japanese nationality to enter a public elementary or junior high school, parents are asked to bring their child's passport and alien registration card to the Education Affairs Division on the 2nd floor of Okaya City Hall in order to apply.

③ Notification of School Entrance

If your child has completed alien registration and will be of school age the following April, you will automatically be sent a 'Notice of School Entrance *Nyūgaku tsūchishō*'

Details such as the name of the school your child is to enter, date and times of health check-ups will be included on the Notice of School Entrance. If you wish for your child to enter school, please bring the notice and your child's alien registration card to the city hall and ensure you apply by the designated date. Even if for some reason you cannot complete the necessary procedures by the designated date, you are welcome to apply at any time throughout the year.

④ Transferring Elementary and Junior High Schools

If your child is transferring from within the city limits, you will need to notify the Citizens Affairs Division of your change of address, and register with the Education Affairs Division.

If however, you are transferring from outside of the city, please bring your child's 'School Registration Certificate *Zaigakushōmeisho*' and 'Textbook Issue Certificate *Kyōkasho Kyōyo Shōmeisho*.' issued by their former school, and register your change of address at the Citizen's Affairs Division before going to the Education Affairs Division.

At the Education Affairs Division, you will be notified of the school your child will attend based upon your new address, as well as be issued a 'School Transfer Notice *Tennyūgakutsūchisho*.'

Take this notice and apply directly at the designated school. If you move from Okaya City to another municipality, you will need to take the 'School Registration Certificate' and 'Textbook Issue Certificate' issued by your child's school to the municipality you are moving to in order to make necessary arrangements to enter a new school.

■ For details please enquire at the Okaya City Educational Affairs Division Tel 0266-23-4811



⑤ Expenses

Tuition and textbooks are free at all public elementary and junior high schools. However, you are required to pay for school supplies and equipment, extra-curricular activities, school trips, school lunch etc. If for financial reasons you are unable to pay these expenses, you may be able to use the 'school aid system,' so please enquire at your child's school or the Okaya City Board of Education located on the 2nd floor of City Hall.

⑥ School Zones

Okaya City is divided into school zones and the school your child will attend depends on where you live. See below to find out which school your child will attend.

Name of School	Zoning Information		
Shinmei Elementary School	Imai 1, 4~12, 3 south of Route 20, Shinmeidai, Imai Enrei, Mashita 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, Mashita Enrei Oikawa 12, 13, 15, 16, 17 south of Route 20, 18, 22, 23, 24,26,27, 28		
Uenohara Elementary School	Yokokawa, Nakamura 7, Imai 2, 13, 14, 15, 3 south of Route 20, Oikawa 17 north of Route 20		
Okaya Elementary School	Mashita 5, 7~15, Okaya, Hizawa, Arayashiki	Tanaka Elementary School	Shimohama, Kooguchi, Kamihama
Oikawa Elementary School	Oikawa 1~11, 14, 19, 20, 21, 25, 29, Oguchi, Nishibori	Minato Elementary School	Minato
Kawagishi Elementary School	Kawagishi	Osachi Elementary School	Nakaya, Nakamura 1~6, 8, 9, Higashibori
Okaya Hokubu Junior High School	Imai, Mashita, Oguchi, Oikawa 3, 4, 10~29, Hizawa	Okaya Nanbu Junior High School	Minato, Shimohama, Kooguchi, Kamihama, Arayashiki
Okaya Tobu Junior High School	Osachi, Nishibori, Oikawa 1, 2, 5~9	Okaya Seibu Junior High School	Kawagishi, Okaya

☆Senior High School *Kōkō*☆

There are three high schools located in Okaya City (Okaya Minami High School, Okaya Higashi High School, Okaya Industrial High School). Students who have graduated from junior high school are eligible to enter senior high school, with about 90% of Japanese doing so. The majority of high schools are prefecturally run, and in order to enter it is necessary to sit an examination. There are also schools that operate on an 'admission upon recommendation' system. Even if you have not graduated from a Japanese junior high school, if it is deemed that you are of about the same academic level, you will be eligible to sit the entrance examination. There are many types of high schools. The main two types of schools being those that offer general courses and other that offer specialist courses (industrial, commerce, agriculture, foreign languages etc.) Other than these, there are also new types of high schools, and those that have an special admission quota for foreigners.

■For further details please enquire at the junior high school your child attends, the municipal office in the city, town, or village where you reside, your nearest Prefectural Education office or the Prefectural Board of Education. (Please have someone enquire in Japanese.)

☆University *Daigaku*☆

University and Junior colleges are schools for students who have graduated from high school. To enter university or junior college, you will need to sit an entrance examination. However, even you have not graduated from a Japanese junior or senior high school, you will be able to sit the entrance examination if it deemed that you are of the same academic level. Some universities have a special admission quota for foreigners.

■For further details, please have a Japanese speaker enquire directly to the school you wish to enter.

☆Child Allowance (*Jidō Teate*) / Child-care Allowance (*Jidō Fuyō Teate*)☆

① Child Allowance

Jidō Teate is an allowance paid to parents and guardians with the purpose being to contribute toward stable family life and to invest in both quality improvements and the proper raising of children who will go on to form future generations.

● Those Eligible...Parents bringing up preschool aged children. ※Please note however, that there is an income limit.

● Amount of Allowance...¥10,000/month for a child under 3 years old, ¥5,000/month for a child over 3 years old, ¥5000/month for a second child/ ¥10,000/month for a third and additional child

■Please enquire at the Okaya Citizens Affairs Division for further details 0266-23-4811

② Child-care Allowance

Jidō-Fuyō Teate is an allowance provided to single-mother families, and other families where the father has a severe disability in order to help with the sound raising of a child.

● Those Eligible...Other than those outlined above, mothers or other caregivers who meet the following criteria are eligible to receive this allowance. ※Please note however, that there is an income limit.

※Allowance will be provided until the end of the financial year after a child has turned 18.

-Children whose father is deceased or it is unknown whether the father is dead or alive, children born to unmarried mothers, children whose father has been imprisoned continuously or who have been abandoned by their father for over one year, children whose father or mother is unknown.

■Please enquire at the Okaya City Social Welfare Division for further details 0266-23-4811