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International Exchange Center



## Preparing to Enter Elementary School!

Does my child need perfect writing or reading skills?

How should we apply?

Can children enter elementary school even if they can't speak Japanese?

What should my child wear to the entrance ceremony?  
Should both parents attend?



What am I expected to do if we receive a gift ("Oiwai")?

Parents and their children are equally happy when the time comes for the little ones to begin elementary school, but concerns and questions also abound. The elementary school system is different to that of kindergarten or nursery school. In elementary school, our children will learn the first steps towards an independent life.

This issue of Purara provides information about the necessary preparations to enter elementary school. As the elementary school system in Japan is most probably different to that of your own countries, we would like to provide as much information as possible to help you secure a healthy, happy and successful school life for both children and parents.

## What does the application process entail?

### Schedule of a Saitama Municipal Elementary School.

Children can enter elementary school next April if they are SIX years old.

October.	You will receive a letter requesting medical check-up for school children	⇒	This letter explains that your child needs to complete a medical check-up to enter school.
Oct-Nov.	Scheduled school children medical checkup	⇒	To check your child's health condition.
Jan.	Admission document	⇒	Once the school has been chosen, you will receive a letter of admission.
Jan-Feb.	Entrance Orientation Meeting	⇒	You will receive details of what to prepare and other important information.
Apr.	Entrance Ceremony	⇒	A Ceremony to mark the beginning of the school year.

\*Both the letter requesting a medical check-up and the admission letter will be sent to your registered resident address.

\*If you have any of the problems listed below (or other issues), please call **048-829-1648 (Japanese language only!)**



- You haven't received the letter of admission.
- Your children will enter an international (private) school.
- Your children will enter a school other than a Saitama Municipal Elementary School.
- You can't register as a local resident because you don't have the required "Special Permanent (or Long Term) Residence Certification" or a "Resident Card"



## What basic knowledge is required of children entering Elementary School?

- They should be able to count from number one (1) to ten (10).
- They should be able to read and write their name in Hiragana.
- They are expected to know how to greet friends and teachers, and listen to their teacher's instructions in the classroom. They are expected to learn about study methods and get used to school life before they use textbooks.
- Children are expected to complete their own tasks by themselves.
- They are expected to have breakfast in the morning and perform their main toilet needs before they leave for school.



\*If your child can't read Japanese characters, don't worry about it. The Japanese elementary school system does not refuse entry to children who do not have Japanese language skills.

## Can children who do not speak Japanese be accepted in a Municipal Elementary School?

Children can learn Japanese as they attend school if they can't speak beforehand.

Please inform the school if you would like to receive support. (Free)

As time goes by, most children learn Japanese as they attend school and make friends with Japanese children. Sharing a learning environment will help your children to improve their language skills.

## Domestic Financial Problems

### 【Cost Free!】

Entrance fees, tuition fees, and textbooks are free of cost in Public Schools



### 【Monthly fee】

Fees to cover school lunch, PTA (Parent –Teacher Association) fee, class’s materials, etc, should be expected.

\*Costs vary from school to school.

•A financial support system exists if you find yourself having difficulties to pay these fees.

You can discuss your situation with the school teachers or contact the **Saitama School Board (phone 048-829-1647)**

## Necessary preparations for school life

Before the Entrance Ceremony that marks the beginning of the school year, there will be an orientation/guidance meeting. In this meeting, you will receive information regarding necessary preparations. E.g.: knapsack (*rando-seru*), classroom shoes, sportswear, gym shoes, stationary, and other items.

## Entrance ceremony attire

There are no strict rules regarding the attire. However, there may be little differences depending on your area of residency. Make sure to check with the school!

Below are examples of the most popular attires:

**Moms** → Bright color suits are popular,

Wearing a flower corsage and jewelry are also ways to look festive.

**Girls**→ Not casual wear, but a little formal.

E.g.: Jacket on a blouse with a skirt. These items are also useful in daily life.

**Boys**→ White or blue shirt on a jacket with half-length pants.



**Shoes** → many children wear sneakers.

## Should both parents attend the Entrance Ceremony?

In many cases both of parents do attend the entrance ceremony. Make sure to check with the school!

## What am I expected to do if we receive a gift (“Oiwai”)?

What is the Congratulatory Gift known as “*go shu gi*” or “*oiwai*”?

This is a tradition in Japanese culture. When we take part in specially happy events, such as entering school, a wedding, child birth, etc., people normally give the family a gift of money, or a tip (*Go shu gi*, *Oiwai*).

If you find yourself in such a situation, don’t refuse the gift, as this is considered bad manners. After the events, you have to give a gift (*uchi iwai*) to the people you received the O-Iwai from. You are expected to choose a gift that costs about half of the gift-money you received, and attach a decorative red and white folded paper with the words “*uchi iwai*” written on it. The white and red paper is called “*noshi*,” and most stores provide “*noshi*” wrapping service.



## Manners when visiting a friend’s home

Most of our children like to play with their friends after school. In such case, basic manners should be observed.

### 【Children】

•Do not wear your school satchel (*rando-seru*).

•Tell your mom/dad where you are going, who with, and when you will be back home.

•When you visit a friend’s house, you are expected to greet your friend’s family members.

**【Moms & Dads】**

- If your children are planning on going to their friends' house, please make sure that you check with their parents first.
- Sometimes children bring snacks or sweets to share during playtime. You can provide some for your child to bring along (check with the parents!).
- When you meet the parents of your children's friend, greet them and mention how much your children like playing together. You can also thank them for allowing their friendship.
- Children receive many letters from school. If you don't understand what the letters say, you can ask the parents of your children's friend, or visit one of our many volunteer Japanese language classes.



こんにちは おじゃまします  
 ありがとう さようなら

**Volunteer Japanese language support courses for children in Saitama City**

Name	Ward	Location	Access	Schedule	Contact
<i>Nihongo no heya</i> Children's course	Urawa	Comunale 9F (Parco) International Exchange center	Urawa, East gate	Friday 18:00~20:00 *except for the 5 <sup>th</sup> Friday of the month	048-813-8500 Saitama Tourism and International Relations Bureau (STIB) International Exchange Center (IEC)
<i>Tabunka kyosei hiroba</i>	Omiya	Saitama University satellite class (Omiya sonic 5F)	Omiya, (5 min walk)	Tuesday 17:30~19:30	090-2431-1520 Ishido
<i>Chikyu-ko club</i> 2000 (Parents and Children's class)	Kita	Uetake kominkan	Toro (Utsunomiya line) or Omiya koen (Tobu noda line) (8min walk)	2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Saturday 13:30~15:00 (Study) 15:00~16:00 (Activities: games, experiments)	090-8804-4249 Takayanagi
<i>Tabunka kosodate no kai</i> Coconico (for parents on children care duty)	Minami	Saitama Coop Coop Plaza Urawa	Minami Urawa, (5 min walk)	1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> Monday 10:30~14:00	080-6123-0175 Inoue 080-6123-0175 Haga

**\*If you have questions regarding the child-care systems or need further information, please contact  
 Child-care support: 048-829-1943 (Only Japanese!)**

**You can also request your Child-care Support Handbook at the welfare support section of any ward office, public health centers, child-care support centers, *Nobi-nobi* rooms, etc. URL: <http://www.city.saitama.jp>**

**【Publisher's information】**

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