

Tips
for Living in

Tsukuba!

No. 8

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English



Topic: About Schools in Japan

【日本の学校について】

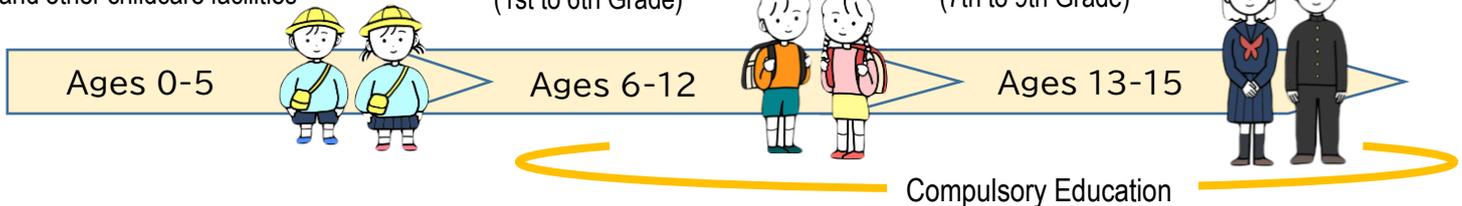
Note: All of the two-dimensional codes in this Tips lead to pages in Japanese. To view the pages in other languages, please use the automatic translation function.

If you are not familiar with the Japanese school system, you may have questions, such as “Which school should our child attend?” and “What procedures do we need to follow?” This guide offers an overview of basic school rules and other helpful information.

Kindergartens, daycare centers
and other childcare facilities

Elementary school
(1st to 6th Grade)

Junior high school
(7th to 9th Grade)



【About Compulsory Education in Japan】

In Japan, compulsory education spans a total of nine years: six years of elementary school (ages 6 to 12, 1st to 6th grade) and three years of junior high school (ages 13 to 15, 7th to 9th grade). If your child holds Japanese nationality, you are legally obligated to ensure that your child receives this education.

If your child does not hold Japanese nationality, you are not subject to this legal obligation. However, **Japan is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms that all children have the right to education without discrimination, regardless of nationality.**

Therefore, your child is also eligible to receive education at Japanese public schools.

【 About the Age Children Start School 】

In Japan, the school year begins in April and ends in March. The school year is based on a cut-off date of April 1, and a child's grade level is determined by their age as of that date. If your child was born between April 2 and April 1 of the following year, they will be placed in the same grade as other children born during that period.

Example: Children entering School in April 2026

→ If your child was born between April 2, 2019 and April 1, 2020, your child will enter

First-Grade Students (ages 6–7).

→ If your child was born between April 2, 2013 and April 1, 2014, your child will enter

Seventh-Grade Students (ages 12–13).

However, if your child does not hold Japanese nationality, the grade your child enters may be determined in consultation with the school, taking into consideration your child's age, Japanese language proficiency, and previous schooling.

【 About Designated Schools (School Districts) 】

In Tsukuba City, public schools include elementary schools, junior high schools, and compulsory education schools. Each school has a designated attendance area (hereinafter referred to as a school district). Your child will, in principle, attend the designated school for the area where you reside.

You may not freely choose which public school your child attends.

【 About Enrolling in a School Other Than the Designated School 】

In the following cases, you must notify the School Affairs Division of Tsukuba City Hall:

- Your child will enroll in a national, prefectural, or private school
- Your child will attend an international school
- Your child will attend a public school in another municipality
- You wish your child to attend a school outside your designated school district (see page 2 for details)

Japan Committee for
UNICEF Website

<https://www.unicef.or.jp/kodomo/cre/cre/learn1/>



Ministry of Education,
Culture, Sports, Science
and Technology (MEXT)
Website

https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/shugaku/detail/1422256.htm



Tsukuba City Website

<https://www.city.tsukuba.lg.jp/s/oshikikarasagasu/kyoikukyokugakumuka/gyomuannai/4/3/1004996.html>



【 About Applying for a Change of Designated School 】

If there is a valid reason for your child to attend a school outside your designated school district, you must apply for a change of the designated school. Your application will be reviewed in accordance with criteria established by the city. Please note that submitting an application does not guarantee approval.

The following reasons are **not** accepted as valid grounds for requesting a change of designated school:

- Wanting your child to attend the same school as their friends
- Wanting your child to attend a school with many students from your country

In principle, if your child attends a school outside your designated school district, parental pick-up and drop-off are mandatory.



Tsukuba City Website

<https://www.city.tsukuba.lg.jp/soshikikarasagasu/kyoikukyokugakumuka/gyomuannual/4/3/1/1001161.html>

【 About Japanese Language Support Class 】

In Tsukuba City, if your child has difficulty understanding or speaking Japanese, they may receive Japanese language support through pull-out classes (special classes held separately from regular lessons). In these classes, your child will learn Japanese and the language used in school life so that they can keep up with regular lessons.

The availability of a Japanese Language Support Class and the type of support provided vary by school.

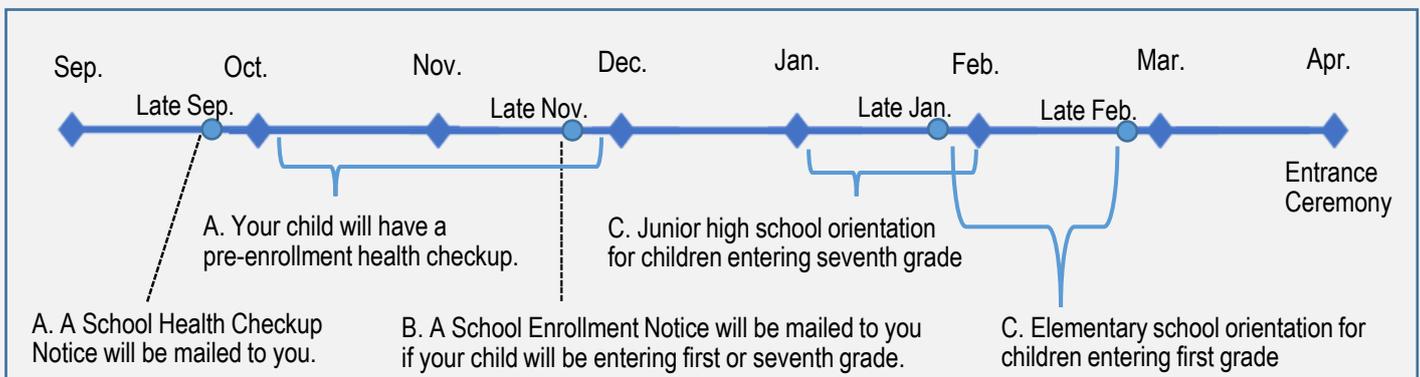
If your designated school does not offer a Japanese Language Support Class, you may apply for a change of designated school in order for your child to attend a school that offers this support. In such cases, your child will be assigned to the school with a Japanese Language Support Class that is closest to your registered address.

Even at schools without a Japanese Language Support Class, your child may receive assistance from Japanese language support staff or volunteer supporters.

If you would like to consult about which school your child will attend, please contact the School Affairs Division of Tsukuba City Hall. If you have questions about Japanese language support after your child's school has been decided, please contact the school directly.

【 Enrollment Process for First-Grade and Seventh-Grade Students 】

Steps to Complete Before Your Child Starts School



A. Pre-Enrollment Health Checkup (For Children Entering First Grade Only)

If your child is entering elementary school or compulsory education school, your child will have a pre-enrollment health checkup between early October and late November.

You will receive a "Health Checkup Notice" in late September. The notice will provide the date, time, and location of the checkup.

B. School Enrollment Notice (For Children Entering First and Seventh Grades)

In late November, you will receive a "School Enrollment Notice" either by mail or in person.

The notice informs you of the designated school your child will attend.

*If you move to a different address within Tsukuba City after the notice is mailed:

After completing your resident registration procedures at the Citizens Services Division of Tsukuba City Hall, please receive a new School Enrollment Notice from the School Affairs Division.

C. School Orientation (For Children Entering First and Seventh Grades)

Before your child starts school, you will be invited to attend an orientation session at your child's school.

- If your child is entering first grade, the orientation will be held from late January to early February
- If your child is entering seventh grade, the orientation will be held from January to February

The content and schedule may vary by school. For details, please contact the school your child will attend.

If You Move to Tsukuba City Just Before Enrollment

If your child will start first or seventh grade and you move to Tsukuba City between December and April, please complete the necessary procedures at the School Affairs Division of Tsukuba City Hall.

Tsukuba City Website



<https://www.city.tsukuba.lg.jp/sos/hikikarasagasu/kyoikukyokugaku/muka/gyomuannual/4/3/1001148.html>

【About School Life】 Note: Each school has its own rules and practices

Please Follow the School Rules.

In Japanese schools, there are rules about clothing and belongings so that many children can spend their time safely together in the same place.

- Examples**
- Please do not bring snacks to school.
 - Please do not bring accessories or expensive items.
 - Makeup and nail polish are not allowed.

Religious considerations, such as wearing a hijab, will be taken into account.



Reporting, Contacting, and Consulting with the School is Very Important.



If your child will be absent or late, please contact the school as soon as you know. If the school does not receive a message from you, they will call to confirm.

“If we do not hear from you and your child does not come to school, we have to check that your child is safe. It can be very worrying for us...” (—A teacher)

Please also inform the school if your child visits a doctor due to an injury or illness, or if there is anything that may affect their school life. Japanese schools also have swimming classes. On days when your child has a swimming class, you are asked to report your child's health condition and whether your child will participate. For safety reasons, if the school does not receive your report, your child will not be allowed to take part in the swimming class.

Please Check Messages From the School

The school may send messages to you through the communication app “*Sukurire* (スクリレ)” or by emergency emails. Some schools also use the medical consultation app “*LEBER*” for reporting your child's attendance. The use of these apps or email depends on the school.

Attendance Suspension and Class Closures

If your child has an infectious disease such as influenza, or if an illness spreads in your child's class, the school may ask your child to stay home.

When only your child is told to stay home, this is called “*Shusseki Teishi* (出席停止)”, which means attendance suspension. When the entire class is told to stay home, this is called “*Gakkyu Heisa* (学級閉鎖)”, which means a class closure.

In both cases, the days at home will not be counted as absences.

PTA Activities

Some schools have PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) activities in which you and teachers work together to improve children's school life.

For example, you may help with school events or do trash-picking around the school.

Whether there is a PTA and how to participate depends on the school.

Going To and From School

Getting your child to and from school is generally your responsibility as a parent or guardian.

Please carefully consider the way your child goes to school, making sure that they can travel safely. In some areas, children walk to school in groups.

In principle, if your child attends a school outside your designated school district, parental pick-up and drop-off are mandatory.



School Lunches



Tsukuba City website
<https://www.city.tsukuba.lg.jp/soshikikarasa-gasukyoikyokukenkokyoikuka/gomuam/ai/1/1/1001176.html>

Japanese schools provide school lunch, and your child will usually eat lunch together with their class.

If your child has allergies or cannot eat certain foods for religious reasons, please consult the school in advance. The school can take measures such as removing certain items from the school lunch or allowing your child to bring a packed lunch.

Note: If you request allergy accommodations, you will need to submit documents from your child's doctor.

Cleaning

At a Japanese school, your child will help clean the school every day. Children work together in groups to clean classrooms, hallways, and other areas of the school.



School-Related Expenses



At public elementary schools, junior high schools, and compulsory education schools in Japan, tuition and textbooks are free of charge. However, you will need to pay other school fees, such as fees for supplementary materials (e.g., kanji and math drill books), field trips, and school trips. The amount you pay may vary depending on the grade level and the school.

In addition, you will need to prepare items used in school life, such as indoor shoes, gym clothes, cleaning cloths, and an emergency protective hood. You will also need to prepare certain items used in classes, such as a keyboard harmonica, recorder, calligraphy set, and paint set. Because of this, there may be times during the school year when expenses are higher. If you have older children or friends who have these items, you may use hand-me-downs.

[School Year Schedule (Example)]

Note: This is only an example. The actual schedule may vary depending on the school. The ★ marks indicate long vacations such as winter break and spring break.

	April	May	June	July	August	September
Grades 1-6	Open class day (for parents)	5th grade: overnight school trip	6th grade: school trip	Parent-teacher conference	★ Summer break (around 40 days)	Sports day; 1st semester final exams
Grades 7-9	Entrance & opening ceremony 9th grade: school trip	Health checkup 7th grade: joining school clubs	1st semester mid-term exams	Parent-teacher-student conference		
	October	November	December	January	February	March
Grades 1-6	Sports day	Parent-teacher conference	School music performance	Grades 4-8 Academic assessment test	Open class day	Graduation & closing ceremony
Grades 7-9	Closing / opening ceremony	School cultural festival	2nd semester mid-term exams	7th grade: ski trip	2nd semester: final exams	

Winter break (around 10 days)
Spring break (around 14 days)

[Extra Information: About International Schools]



MEXT website

https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/shugaku/detail/1422252.htm

In Japan, there is no clear legal definition of an “international school.”

Generally, international schools are educational institutions that conduct classes mainly in English or primarily serve children from overseas. However, except for international schools that are officially recognized as schools under Article 1 of the School Education Act, many international schools are not considered to fulfill Japan’s compulsory education requirements.



Attending a Japanese Public School During Long Vacations

If your child attends an international school and you wish to have your child attend a Japanese public school during a long vacation period, you must consult in advance with the the School Affairs Division of Tsukuba City Hall and the Japanese public school. Your child cannot freely attend or take time off from a public school. You must discuss and decide the periods of attendance and non-attendance with the school in advance.

Note from Translator/翻訳者から一言

Changing schools can be a daunting experience. When I transferred schools in 5th grade, I was incredibly nervous, especially because classes were in a new language. I still remember that on my very first day, a girl in my class complimented my shoes. It was a small thing, but it helped me feel a little less alone. It’s a simple reminder that a few kind words can go a long way!

転校って、とても緊張しますよね。私が小学5年生のとき、日本の学校から海外の学校に転校した初日、初めて英語で授業を受けることもあって、かなりドキドキしていました。そんなとき、クラスの女の子が「その靴いいね」と声をかけてくれたことを、今でもよく覚えています。ほんの一言でしたが、そのおかげで少し気持ちがほぐれました。ちょっとした優しい言葉って、思っている以上に人を救ってくれるものですね。