

## 1 Japanese School System

### (1) Pre-school Education

Children under elementary school age can attend a kindergarten (*Yochien*), daycare center (*Hoikusho* or *Hoikuen*), or designated child care center. The period of attendance varies among towns, cities, and facilities.

Kindergartens are educational institutions (schools) designed to help infants and small children from 3 years, up to elementary school age develop their bodies and minds. The curriculum is based on five areas: health, interpersonal skills, environment, vocabulary, and expression.

Daycare centers look after infants and small children whose parents/guardians are not at home due to work etc. and who need to be provided with the necessary care. Unlike kindergartens, daycare centers are welfare institutions that combine child care and education for children aged 0 to 6. The child care provided there consists of nursing activities for maintenance of life and emotional stability and educational activities based on the same five areas as in kindergartens.

Designated child care centers provide comprehensive child care and educational support to children under elementary school age, regardless of whether the parents/guardians are working or not. Designated child care centers combine the functions of kindergartens and daycare centers for children aged 0 to 6.

### (2) Elementary & Junior High School Education

① Children enter elementary schools (*Shougakkou*) in the April following their 6th birthday. After six years of study, children graduate from elementary school to enter junior high school (*Chuugakkou*) for a further three years of study. Both elementary and junior high schools are compulsory education.

② Elementary and junior high schools follow a standardized national system, in which every child receives the same level of education. In public schools, no tuition is required and textbooks are provided free of charge. However, some other materials need to be paid by parents/guardians.

③ After completing compulsory education and passing a school entrance examination, the child can advance on to a high school or vocational technical school. High schools have general programs, specialized programs that principally provide vocational education, and/or integrated programs that allow students to voluntarily select courses from a various selection. High school education continues for three years. High schools offer full-time schooling, evening classes and/or correspondence courses.

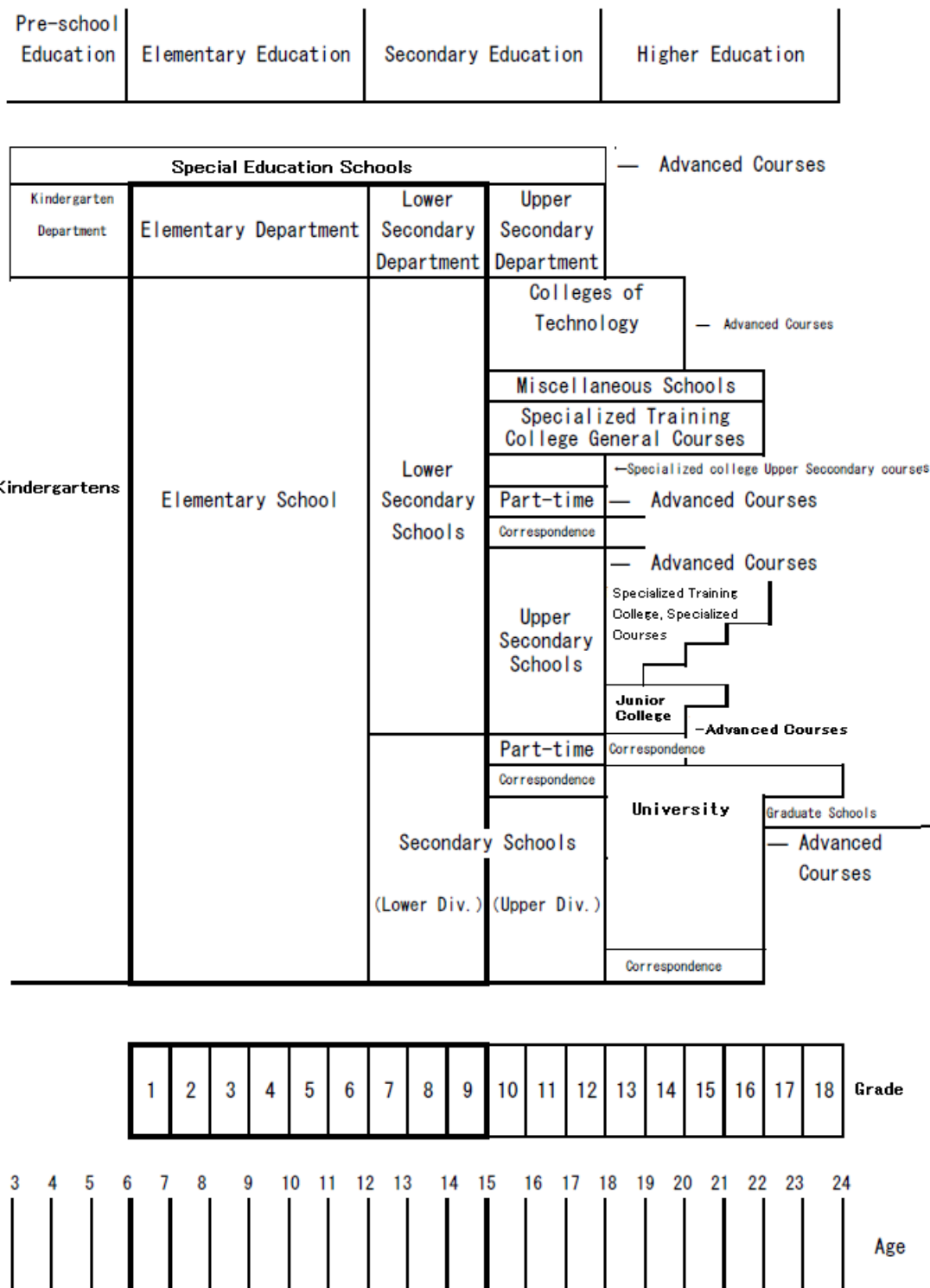
④ In order to support the independence and societal participation of children with disabilities, there are special education schools, as well as elementary and middle schools with special education programs. The schools offer education based on the needs of the children. The programs at special education schools are free of charge.

### (3) Higher Education

Higher education is mainly provided at universities and colleges, offering highly specialized programs. The average university student is expected to earn his/her degree in 4 years, and a college student in 2 years. Higher levels of education are also available at graduate schools (2 to 5 years).

In addition, there are other educational institutions that offer vocational training for various professions (mainly 2 years in duration).

## School Education System in Japan



Source: "Guidebook for Starting School," published by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in April 2015.

## 2 Procedures for Starting School

### ○ Procedures for Foreign Students to Enroll in Compulsory Education

Parents/guardians need to visit the nearest city/town/village office or the office of the board of education and submit a request form for their children to attend a Japanese public school. If they wish to send their children to a private school, they need to contact the school directly and apply by themselves.

[Reference] *"Guidebook for Starting School,"* published by The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology  
[http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/clarinet/003/1320860.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/clarinet/003/1320860.htm)

### ○ After-School Children's Clubs

First to sixth grade children whose parents/guardians are not home may join the after-school children's club. This club provides a place to play and spend time in a homelike environment designed to aid children's sound development.

For further information on location, contact, application details, or services available, please contact your local city/town/village office.

## 3 Contents of Education

### (1) Curriculum

The contents of what is to be taught at a school is stated in the curriculum guidelines set by the Department of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Based on the guidelines, school activities fall into the following categories: (a) subjects (b) ethics (c) foreign language activities (d) comprehensive learning activities and (e) special activities.

#### ① Subjects

The following subjects are taught in elementary schools: Japanese, Social Studies, Arithmetic, Science, Practical Studies, Music, Arts & Crafts, Home Economics, and Physical Education (PE). In Foreign Language Activities, English is usually taught.

The following subjects are taught in junior high schools: Japanese, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Music, Art, PE, Industrial Arts & Home Economics, and Foreign Languages.

#### ② Ethics

Ethics classes are allocated for developing awareness and understanding of one's identity and way of living as a person in order to improve the mind, attitude, and lifestyle.

#### ③ Foreign Language Activities

Foreign Language Activities aim to deepen students' understanding of languages and cultures through experience. By learning the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages, the students will develop the basic foundation for active communication.

#### ④ Comprehensive Learning Activities

Comprehensive activities are intended to go beyond the academic framework through experiencing nature, being involved in volunteer work, and other productive activities. Through acquiring real-life hands-on experience and participating in practical learning activities, students can find out how to learn and think and improve their problem-solving skills and perspectives on life.

#### ⑤ Special Activities

Special Activities include for the following activities: class discussions, school sports day, music festivals, work-experience, etc. Through these activities, each student can develop their potential and excellence and improve on teamwork skills with friends to acquire a better attitude toward life.

(2) Other educational activities not mentioned in (1) are as follows:

○ Cleaning

Every day, at a set time, students and teachers clean the school together. In Japan, school cleaning is regarded as an important part of the education.

○ School Lunches

Schools provide school lunches from Monday through Friday. School lunches are either made inside or outside the school and eaten at lunchtime in each classroom. Preparation duties and cleaning before and after lunch is allocated to a different group of students each time. However, school lunches are not provided if there are special school events or if the city or town cannot provide this service. In such circumstances, students need to bring their own packed lunch (*bento*) to school. Lunch fees are to be paid by each parent/guardian.

○ Events

There are many events held throughout the school year such as entrance ceremonies, graduations, term-commencement and end-of-term ceremonies, some of which guardians are encouraged to come and see. Parents/guardians should make every effort to attend these events when they are asked to do so.

○ Club Activities

Students participate in Club Activities on a voluntary basis to engage in sports, culture, science, and other education.

#### 4 Advancing to Higher Grades and Higher-Level Schools

There is no grade-skipping during compulsory education in Japan. From the time of entering school (or transfer), children progress to a higher grade each year. It is rare for children to repeat grades except in such cases as a prolonged illness or other long-term incidents. On completion of compulsory education, students normally take an entrance examination in order to enter a senior high school.

#### 5 School Expenses

(1) Educational fees, etc.

In public elementary schools, junior high schools, and special education elementary and middle schools, textbooks and lessons are provided free of charge. Tuition and textbook fees are required at high schools and special education high schools. (However, Senior High School Tuition Aid or Scholarship Benefits for Senior High School Students may be available depending on the household income. Special education schools have financial support programs.) Private elementary and junior high schools require both tuition and textbook fees.

In addition, the following items/expenses must be paid for by parents/guardians either by cash, through direct withdrawal from a bank account, or by making a bank transfer to an account designated by the school (Details of payment methods will be provided by each school): teaching materials, school bags/shoes etc., field trips, school trips, school lunches, and PTA membership Fees.\*

\*When children enter school, their guardians automatically become members of the school's PTA (Parents & Teachers Association). PTA membership fee is used to support school activities and provide learning activities for guardians themselves.

(2) Financial assistance for senior high school students

Whether they attend public or private schools, senior high school

students, if qualified, may be awarded Scholarship Benefits for Senior High School Students to cover their tuition. Private senior high school students can get an additional amount, depending on the household income. Repayment is not required.

In addition, if qualified, students from low-income households may receive Senior High School Tuition Aid to assist them in paying educational fees other than their tuition, such as fees for textbooks, teaching materials and school supplies. Repayment is not required.

## 6 Financial Support

### (1) Financial Support for Elementary & Junior High School Students

To ensure children receive education in elementary and high schools, financial support is available for parents/guardians with financial difficulties.

If you have difficulties paying for study materials, supplies, activities outside schools, school trips or lunch, please contact your school or local board of education.

This support is also available to parents/guardians with children at private schools and university-attached elementary/junior high schools.

### (2) [For Your Reference] Scholarships & Tuition Discounts at High Schools and Universities/Colleges:

There are scholarship loan programs for high school or university/college students with financial difficulties. The amounts of the scholarships listed here are as of April 2016.

#### ① Scholarship Loans offered by Tottori Prefecture (*Tottori-ken Ikuei Shougaku Shikin*): Scholarship Loan per Month

High Schools etc.	Public	Commute from home	18,000 yen
		Commute from outside home	23,000 yen
	Private	Commute from home	30,000 yen
		Commute from outside home	35,000 yen
Universities/Colleges	Public		45,000 yen
	Private		54,000 yen

\* Those who wish to receive scholarship loans must apply to their respective high schools by the following deadlines: the end of April for high school scholarships; the end of August for university/college scholarships. Applicants must submit an income certificate for a high school scholarship. Both, an income certificate and a transcript of academic record, are to be submitted for a university/college scholarship.

#### ② Type 1: Interest-Free Scholarship Loans offered by Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO): Scholarship loan per month

Technical Colleges	Public	Commute from home	21,000 yen
		Commute from outside home	22,500 yen
	Private	Commute from home	32,000 yen
		Commute from outside home	35,000 yen
Universities/Colleges	Public	Commute from home	45,000 yen
		Commute from outside home	51,000 yen
	Private	Commute from home	54,000 yen
		Commute from outside home	64,000 yen

\* An optional 30,000 yen scholarship loan can be elected regardless of the above categories.

\* Those who wish to receive JSSO scholarship must apply through their schools. Applicants are required to submit an income certificate and a transcript of academic record.

- Tuition exemption/discounts at private high schools  
Some schools have tuition exemption programs. Please contact each school for details.

## 7 Major Events at School

Japanese schools start in April and end in March in the following year. The school year is usually divided into two or three terms, depending on each city/town/village.

The following is a list of the main school activities. What they are called and when they are carried out, vary from school to school.

First Term: April to July    \*Two-semester schools: April to September

Opening Ceremony (*Shigyou shiki*) April

Students gather to mark the start of the new school year.

Entrance Ceremony (*Nyuugaku shiki*) April

First graders are warmly welcomed in the ceremony. Students and parents/guardians usually attend the ceremony in formal attire.

Medical Check-up (*Shintai sokutei*) April to June

Students' height, weight etc. are measured in addition to a medical check by a doctor.

Field Trip (*Ensoku*)

Students go out of schools to learn the local culture, history and natural environment on a practical basis.

Class Observation (*Jugyou sankan*)

Parents/guardians visit their children's school to observe their class and see how they are doing at school.

Parent-Teacher Conferences (*Kondan kai*)

Parents/guardians exchange opinions and information with teachers. The conferences are usually held after class observations.

Home Visit (*Katei Houmon*)

The homeroom teacher visits each student's home and talks to parents/guardians.

Swimming (*Suiei*)

In summer, swimming is included in the physical education class.

Private Parent-Teacher Meeting (*Kojin Kondan Kai*)

The class teacher discusses with a parent/guardian privately on his/her child's school life.

End of Semester Ceremony (*Shuugyou Shiki*) - July

School declares the end of the first semester. Teachers give each student a report card.

Summer Holiday (*Natsu Yasumi*) - mid-July to the end of August

A long break of 30-40 days.

Second Term: September to December

\*Two-semester schools: October to March. Autumn break is included just before the latter semester commences

Opening Ceremony (*Shigyo Shiki*) - September

Students gather to mark the start of the second term.

Athletics Day (*Undoukai/Taiikutaikai*)

Sports and activities are held for students to participate and cheer on classmates (such as short-distance running, relays, ball games, and dancing). Some schools also allow family members to participate in certain activities.

Evacuation Drills (*Hinan Kunren*)

Emergency drills are carried out in preparation for earthquake, fire, etc.

Music and school festivals (*Ongaku Kai, Bunka Sai, Gakushu Happyo Kai*)

Choirs, music ensembles, theaters, and art work performances or displays are presented by students.

End of Semester Ceremony (*Shuugyou Shiki*) - December

Formal announcement of the end of second term. Report cards are distributed to students.

Winter Holiday (*Fuyu Yasumi*) - end of December to beginning of January

A relatively short two-week break.

Third Term: January to March

Opening Ceremony (*Shigyou Shiki*) - January

Students gather to mark the start of the third term.

Graduation Ceremony (*Sotsugyou Shiki*) - March

Students receive a graduation certificate and are congratulated. Parents/guardians of the graduating students also attend this ceremony.

End of the Year Ceremony (*Shuuryou Shiki*) - March

This ceremony not only declares the end of the third term, but also the end of the entire school year. Report cards are distributed to students.

Spring Holiday (*Haru Yasumi*) - end of March to beginning of April

Spring holiday begins straight after the End of the Year Ceremony. When this holiday ends, students move up to the next grade. April is the month where all students commence a new school year.

[Other Major School Events for Certain Graders]:

School Trip (*Shuugaku Ryokou*)

Usually aimed for 6th-year elementary and 3rd-year junior high students. They visit places of interest, tour facilities, and experience hands-on activities.

Work Experience (*Shokuba Taiken Gakushuu*)

Aimed for 2nd year junior high students. They participate in work experience for approximately one week (away from school) in their local community (child-care centers, retail stores, firms, etc.).

Indoor Overnight Training (*Shukuhaku Kunren*)

Students stay overnight in an indoor facility and participate in group activities.

## 8 A Day at School

[Elementary School]

[Junior High School]

### Arrive School

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| <p>(General Morning Assembly): Depending on each school, students gather monthly and listen to the school principal's talk and announcements.</p> <p>(Morning Class Assembly): Students discuss their day-to-day lifestyle in the classroom.</p> <p>(Morning reading or self-study): Some schools dedicate 10~15 minutes of morning reading, maths, or calligraphy time before lessons start.</p> | <p> </p> |
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### Teaching Begins

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#### Lessons:

- Most lessons are 45 minutes long.
- 4 lessons are conducted in the morning.
- Almost all lessons are conducted and supervised under the guidance of the homeroom teacher.
- All lessons are conducted in Japanese. However, foreign languages (primarily English) are used in class during Foreign Language Activities.

#### Lessons:

- Most lessons are 50 minutes long.
- 4 lessons are conducted in the morning.
- Teacher for each subject differs.
- All subjects (except for the language class) are conducted in Japanese.

### School Lunch

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When school lunches are not provided, students bring their own packed lunch. Please inform homeroom teacher if you are unable to eat school lunch for health, religious, or any other reasons.

#### Lunch Break & Cleaning

- Some schools allocate cleaning time at the end of the day.

#### Lunch Break & Cleaning

#### Afternoon Lessons:

- Depending on the day or grade, one or two lessons are carried out in the afternoon.
- Lessons finish at different times, depending on grade and day of the week.
- Dismissal times vary as each grade and school conduct different sports and activities after school.

#### Afternoon Lessons:

### End of School Day

### End of School Day

School Clubs: Under the supervision of teachers, students engage in sports and cultural activities after school.

## 9 School Rules

School rules are implemented so that students can participate in group activities in a healthy, safe, and enjoyable environment. For any queries, please do not hesitate to ask a teacher or any of your school friends.



○Arrival Time & School Routes

- Please arrive at your school by ( : )
- To ensure the safety of students, each school determines the safest routes to school. This is referred to as *tsuugaku ro* (school routes).
- Primary means of commuting to school is on foot. However, there are schools that provide school buses.
- At some elementary schools, students gather and commute to school in groups.
- Depending on the school, commuting by bicycle for junior high students is permissible.

○Notice of Absence

- When a student is unable to attend school, his/her guardian/parent needs to contact the school directly by ( : ) through either of the following ways.  
TEL ( - )  
FAX ( - )
- In addition, an absence report or his/her correspondence book needs to be submitted, which can be handed in by a neighboring student.

○School Holidays

- Schools are closed on Saturdays and Sundays and on national holidays.
- When students need to attend an event at school on a holiday, the school usually closes on a regular school day instead.
- Saturday Lessons (*doyo jugyo*) may be held on Saturday without a substitute school closure.

National Holidays

January 1 <sup>st</sup> : New Year's Day	3rd Monday of July: Marine Day
2nd Monday of Jan.: Coming of Age	August 11 <sup>th</sup> : Mountain Day
February 11 <sup>th</sup> : National Foundation	3rd Mon. of Sept.: Respect for the Aged
March 20 <sup>th</sup> : Vernal Equinox	September 23 <sup>rd</sup> : Autumnal Equinox
April 29 <sup>th</sup> : Showa Day	2nd Mon. of Oct.: Health & Sports Day
May 3 <sup>rd</sup> : Constitution Day	November 3 <sup>rd</sup> : Culture Day
May 4 <sup>th</sup> : Greenery Day	November 23 <sup>rd</sup> : Labor Thanksgiving
May 5 <sup>th</sup> : Children's Day	December 23 <sup>rd</sup> : Emperor's Birthday

\* If a national holiday falls on a Sunday, Monday becomes a holiday as a substitute.

○Long Holidays

- Summer Holiday July to August
- Autumn Holiday October to October
- Winter Holiday December to January
- Spring Holiday March to April

○Temporary Deferral of School

- If a student is diagnosed with an infectious disease like influenza, measles, rubella, mumps, chickenpox, etc., he/she is required to stay at home until a doctor permits regular attendance.

○Health and Safety

- Schools carry out regular medical checkups.
- Please notify a teacher in the event of an illness or injury at school. Students can be taken to the nurse's office to receive first-aid treatment or rest.
- The compensation plan set up by the Japan Sport Council provides assistance in the event of an accident or injury at school. However, a guardian will need to pay a portion of the fees for this assistance (approx. 400 yen).

○Other Matters Relating to School Life

- During school hours, students cannot leave school grounds without a teacher's permission.
- Students need to change into indoor shoes when entering a school building. Some schools also require different shoes for entering the gymnasium.
- Please avoid bringing unnecessary money, valuables, or unnecessary belongings to school.
- Please write your name on your belongings.
- Some schools may have codes on clothing and hairstyle.

○What you'll need at school:

- Textbooks will be provided free of charge at school.
- The following school materials will need to be prepared by a guardian/parent:
  - Bag: A school bag called *radoseru*.
  - Stationary: Pencil case, eraser, ruler, pencils, red pencil, underlay sheet for writing (*shitajiki*), crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue, etc.
  - School lunch items: Surgical mask and bag, chopsticks, chopsticks box, etc.
  - PE gear: Gym uniform, hat, gym shoes and bag.  
*\*Gym uniform differs from school to school, please ask which one to get.*
  - Other materials: Name badge, floor cloth (*zoukin*), handkerchief, tissues, etc.

*\*Please ensure that your name is on your belongings.*