

An interview with Chika Kitao – Ebisu School



Chika Kitao's daughter, Tsubasa, is currently in Grade 3 and attended the school from two and a half years old. Her son, Kei, is currently a K3 student and has been attending Ebisu School since he was one and a half. Tsubasa is currently enrolled in an international school in Tokyo and there are plans for Kei to join there after graduation in the spring.

1. Why did you choose our school?

As I was playing at the park with my daughter, I saw children happily playing together in English. I thought, "Wow, it's amazing that they speak English outside of the classroom like that." That was when the teacher, Leigh said, "Hello!" to me and handed me a flyer in a friendly manner. Looking back on it, it was a very defining moment. When I attended a few days later for a trial lesson, I was surprised to see very small children in the classrooms reading, writing, and learning in English in a lively manner. There were also art projects and essays written in English by the children up on the walls. Seeing that the students could not only speak English, but they could also read and write well, made me sure I wanted the same for my daughter. I just had a feeling it was the right place for her seeing how the teachers made the lessons fun so the children didn't become bored and yet still educational.

2. Tell us about your child at the start of the program.

In the case of my daughter, we had been attending a parent and child English class once a week, yet she had never shown any real interest in English. However, after she began attending the PIP program, I noticed that it was not only English she was learning, but that English was also being gained naturally through fun activities involving art, music, and sports.

With my son, at first, he was very young and of course, cried. However, the teachers were all accustomed with dealing with very young children. By the time I went to pick him up, he was in a good mood. Through the daily reports given to me by his teacher, I was able to see what he had and had not eaten from his lunch, how many times he had been to the bathroom, and other health related information. I was able to get a real feel for how my child was progressing.

3. Tell us about your child now.

Our daughter was attending a public school until the middle of Grade 2 when she suddenly began telling us she wanted to attend an international school. We were surprised at first, but wanting to fulfill her wishes, we transferred her to an international school. Using English to her seemed like the natural thing to do. I believe that

is because of four skills she learned in PIP. This taught her the importance of conveying what it is she wants.

Our son is currently the K3 class. From last year, he has been attending the longer eight-hour PAP program. With such a large increase in his time spent in a full English environment, I have noticed English entering his conversations with us naturally at home. I also feel like he has a stronger understanding when reading books in English. He now organizes on his own and has a better understanding of self-management.

In our home, we now also see more and more occasions where our son starts conversations with our daughter in English. Our daughter is quite strict with her English and will correct mine.

4. Do you feel like there was a certain point where your child grew the most?

When our daughter was around K2 ~ K3 age, we moved to Leeds, England for about a year. This was due to my husband's work schedule. Our daughter attended Reception Year and Year 1 at a local school. Even though there were no other Japanese children around her, the material she learned in PIP paid off, and she was able to smoothly integrate with her local classmates. At PIP, the children learn all the major subjects. With Math in particular, she could do tasks her local classmates could not, and she was placed in the honor student group. This made her really proud. We had one of her teachers from the time write a letter of recommendation when she wanted to transfer to an international school. She had no difficulties passing the entrance exam.

5. What activities does your child most enjoy doing at our school?

Our son loves Fun Fun Friday. There's this sort of special feeling that comes at the end of the week. He always tells me excitedly about the well-planned activity for the week. Some of these activities include those which allow the child to celebrate certain aspects of Japanese culture, such as mochi-pounding, Girls' Festival, Setsubun, Tanabata and others. The events and cultural studies are completed on a large scale, which always impresses me.

With the change to the eight-hour program, the students are now able to go on field trips to locations further away. During a recent trip to a canyon, our son was able to play in the river and catch fish by hand. These are important experiences we aren't able to provide him at home. We feel are very grateful for these opportunities.

6. What are your plans for your child in the future?

We plan to continue sending our daughter to her current international school and are considering having her continue her studies abroad in the future. She has always been an independent thinker, so we plan to offer as much support as possible.

In order to make the best use of the English our son has learned in the PAP program, we plan to send him to the same international school as his sister. The days spent learning at PAP are a true asset to the children and really provide a solid base for their future endeavors. I want to say again how grateful I am to the PAP program for what it has done.

7. Do you have any advice for parents thinking of enrolling their child in the PAP program?

I want to tell them that the PAP program is a thriving program. The teachers are people you can trust. Since class sizes are small, the students all get along well with no issues. The teachers carefully look after each student and teach them in a manner tailored for them. I feel like there are not many schools where children can sit and study at such a young age. This is the perfect school for those parents thinking they want their children to have fun, but also receive an academic education.