

An interview with Takako Ishigaki – Kamikitazawa School



The Ishigaki family's daughter (currently K3) has attended PAP since before she turned three. Their son (currently K1) has attended since he was two years and five months old.

1. Why did you choose our school?

When I met my husband in London while I was traveling, neither of us could communicate well with the locals. We thought it would have been much more enjoyable if we had been able to better communicate in English with the people around us. Japan is homogeneous in a lot of ways, in that anywhere you travel to in the country, you can use Japanese to communicate. We wanted our children to realize from a young age just how unique and isolated of an environment it is.

I was thinking I wanted my children to attend English lessons. It was during this time of consideration, I happened to pass by the PAP building and decided to send my children there.

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

Our daughter began her lessons just before the summer. At first, she felt lost in such an unfamiliar environment and cried for about a month. However, once she began opening up to the teachers she liked, she began enjoying school. I had the chance to speak to one of her teachers at the Christmas party that year who told me she was gradually speaking more and more English. She had begun to speak in full sentences at that point.

Influenced by his sister, our son looked forward to the day he could begin attending school. He understood some basic English before he started his own lessons, likely due to hearing his sister speak some English at home and also getting to hear English at pickup and drop off times.

3. Tell us about your child now.

Both of the children actively seek out and watch English media on platforms such as YouTube. They appear to completely understand what they watch, going so far as to explain to me what is happening. My son often

watches programs with his sister and they talk about what they watch together in English. They also enjoy speaking in English to chefs at some of the restaurants we go to, telling them what they enjoyed about the food. When we speak English to our children, they correct us if our pronunciation is wrong.

My daughter tells me how she wishes to go to PAP on Saturday, and how she'll be a teacher at PAP in the future. She loves all the teachers, because they are friendly, interesting, and have positive attitudes. When a new teacher comes to their class, she tells me about the culture of where that teacher is from. Attending for longer hours has made it as if she is living a part of her life with her teacher. She has grown even closer to them.

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

Our daughter really enjoys riding on the school bus and going to places with a lot of nature. She especially enjoyed the trip taken to Akikawa Valley this past summer. She told us with excitement how she caught fish with her bare hands and ate two of them.

At school, she had a lot of fun during the event where the children made their own passports and went around to "countries" getting stamps and doing activities related to that country. At the Australian corner, she got to learn firsthand about the aboriginal people and made a boomerang.

She also enjoys doing the various subject studies, such as Math and Science. Thanks to her studies at PAP, she asks me questions about natural events and tells me about the interesting math she is learning. A variety of subjects are offered, which allow students to grow interested in them, regardless of whether they are good at them or not at that moment.

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

I would like my children to continue into Jupiter program through elementary school and then let them decide what they would like to do in the future. English has become a normal part of their lives. If they should choose to study abroad, then I hope this allows them to learn not only the English language, but also allow them to experience lifestyles and cultures not found in Japan. This would help expose them a variety of world views and different ways of thinking.

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

Although not something that happens during lessons, I occasionally have a chance to talk with the teachers about my children in the mornings. This is a school where you can discuss any small worries with the staff as soon as you have them, which is why I can trust leaving my children safely in the care of the school. I feel like the school does a great job with helping the students grow, but not only in English. Now that the school is an extended hours childcare facility, our children speak in English to each other naturally. I plan to continue to send my children to the school after graduation as well.