

Chapter 7 Education



Saitama's Prefectural Mascot
Kobaton

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The Japanese education system consists of 6 years of elementary school, 3 years of junior high school, 3 years of senior high school, and 4 years of university. Children usually begin elementary school at the age of 6, junior high at 12, senior high at 15 and university when they are 18. In addition to 4-year universities, there are also 2-year junior colleges and various technical schools.

Elementary and junior high school are compulsory education. Foreign resident children are exempt from this obligation; however, those who desire to attend may do so.

The academic year begins in April and finishes at the end of March the following year. Most schools have 3 semesters: 1st – April to August; 2nd – September to December; and 3rd – January to March. However, some schools just have 2 semesters: the 1st – April to September; and 2nd – October to March. All classes are conducted in Japanese.

Many children attend kindergarten or nursery school before they enter elementary school.

1 Kindergarten

Kindergarten is for children from ages 3 to 5 who are too young to attend elementary school. (However, the target age group may vary for each institution.) Though many Japanese children attend kindergarten or nursery school, it is not compulsory. It is standard for kindergartens to operate for 4 hours a day. Although kindergarten begins in April each year, you must apply by a specified date in the previous academic year.

As fees, procedures for enrollment, and target age group differ between institutions, please contact the municipal board of education in your area for questions about public kindergartens, and contact individual private kindergartens within the prefecture directly.

You can search for private kindergartens in Saitama Prefecture using the website below.

<http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/a0204/shiritsuitiran/youchienichiran.html>

(Saitama Prefectural Government Private School Affairs Division website)

For Centers for Early Childhood Education and Care (*nintei kodomo-en*), see Chapter 5.4: Nurseries and Centers for Early Childhood Education and Care.

Saitama Prefecture has published "The Three Sprouts: A Brief Childcare Guide," a leaflet that outlines skills that children should learn before enrolling in elementary school. These skills are divided into three broad categories: "Daily Life," "Interacting with Others," and "Curiosity & Caring," for easy reference. To access these leaflets (in simple Japanese, English, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Tagalog, Korean, Vietnamese, and Indonesian in addition to Japanese), visit the following website. All of these are listed on the website and can be used as needed.

<https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/f2214/mebae02/mebae-panfuri-fu.html>

2 Elementary and Junior High School

If you would like to enroll your child in a public elementary or junior high school in Saitama, you need to take your child's Resident Record to the board of education at your local municipal or ward office (for residents of Saitama City), tell them that you want to enroll your child in school, and complete the necessary forms. The board of education will notify you of which school your child should attend.

(1) Elementary School

Children must be 6 years old as of April 1 of the year they enter elementary school. Enrollment for first graders is conducted around September of the previous year. If your

child's enrollment is accepted, a "Notification of Admission" (*shugaku tsuchisho*) will be sent to you in January.

For children with disabilities, there are special needs classes available, as well as support for students in non-special needs classes.

(2) Junior High School

Students must be 12 years old as of April 1 of the year they enter junior high school. In January each year, a "Notification of Junior High School Admission" (*chugakko shugaku tsuchisho*) is sent to children who will be graduating from elementary school that year.

Almost all junior high schools require students to wear school uniforms. For information on where to buy your child's uniform, contact the school.

For children with disabilities, there are special needs classes available, as well as support for students in non-special needs classes.

(3) Transfer

If your child has studied at an elementary or junior high school overseas and you want them to continue their studies at an elementary or junior high school in Saitama Prefecture, notify the local board of education after completing resident registration procedures at your local municipal office (or ward office for residents of Saitama City).

(4) Changing Schools

If the school you are zoned for changes as a result of moving, your child will have to change schools.

Before you move, please ask your child's current school for a certificate of enrollment and textbook list. When you submit your notice of moving out at your current municipal or ward office, be sure to report that your child attends elementary or junior high school. After you move, you should report that your child is attending elementary or junior high to your new municipal or ward office. Please also submit the certificate of enrollment and textbook list to your child's new school.

Please also notify the school if you will be leaving Japan.

(5) School Costs

Students of public elementary and junior high schools in Saitama are not charged for enrollment, course, and textbook fees. However, the student's guardians must pay school lunch and instructional material fees. To pay these fees, many guardians set up an account at a bank specified by the school from which expenses are automatically deducted.

(6) PTAs (Parent Teacher Associations)

Parents or guardians and teachers cooperate to increase their understanding of children's education both in school and at home and to support the growth and development of the children. Joining the PTA is optional, and you can withdraw at any time. Parents and guardians will need to understand the expectations and responsibilities of the role before joining. PTA fees differ from school to school, so please contact your child's school directly for more information.

(7) After School Children's Club (After School Child Care)

After school care is available for elementary school students whose parents or guardians are unable to take care of them after school because of work, etc. Since the cost of this service and the application procedures differ between municipalities, please contact the division in charge of children's welfare at your local municipal or ward office for further information.

(8) Education for Children Who Do Not Speak Japanese

Staff who can teach Japanese are available at some schools that have many students who cannot speak Japanese. The Saitama Prefectural Government has also provided information useful for school life and daily life, which can be accessed via the following website:

<https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/f2214/kikokugaikokujinsapoutojigyous240120.html>

(9) Guidebook for Starting School for Non-Japanese Parents and Guardians

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has written a "Guidebook for Starting School" oriented toward non-Japanese parents and guardians, which explains the procedures for entering Japanese schools in a number of languages. It can be accessed from the following website:

https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/clarinet/003/1320860.htm

3 Senior High School

Senior high school education is not compulsory in Japan. There are 4 different types of senior high schools: national, prefectural, municipal and private. These schools can be further divided into ones that offer a standard curriculum such as English, Mathematics, Japanese, Science, and Social Studies, and others that specialize in fields such as Commerce, Industry, Agriculture, etc. for occupation-specific study. Some schools are beginning to offer a new integrated curriculum to encourage students to think about their future path. Students can choose from various ways of studying: full-day attendance from the

morning, part-time*, or by correspondence*.

* Some students work while studying part-time or via correspondence. Part-time students usually attend night classes. In correspondence courses, students attend class on designated school days approximately 3 times a month, and otherwise study at home and submit their work to the school. There are also part-time high schools which offer classes during the daytime and evening.

For more information, see the “Saitama Prefectural Board of Education website:

<https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/f2208/tei-tuu-sienninn.html>

(1) Entrance Examinations

To be eligible to take entrance exams, you must have graduated or expect to graduate from a Japanese junior high school or an equivalent thereof. Alternatively, if you have completed at least 9 years of formal education overseas, you may take this exam after completing procedures for obtaining a certificate that demonstrates your eligibility to apply to high school (qualification certificate).

High school entrance examinations and classes are conducted in Japanese.

Public high schools administer standard entrance examinations on the same pre-determined day. The entrance examination schedule and admission requirements for national and private high schools vary, so please contact the school you wish to attend for more information. For information on entering a public high school, contact the junior high school you currently attend.

Q&A on prefectural public high school entrance examinations (on the website of the High School Education Management Division, Saitama Education Bureau).

Japanese: <https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/f2208/r6nyuushiqa.html>

English: <https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/f2208/r6englishfaq.html>

Chinese: <https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/documents/222625/r6chinesefaq2.pdf>

Portuguese: <https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/documents/222625/r6portuguesefaq2.pdf>

Spanish: <https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/documents/222625/r6spanishfaq2.pdf>

(2) School Costs

There are admission and course fees as well as the cost of textbooks and other instructional materials.

At public prefectural high schools, financial aid and scholarship allowances based on income are available. Admission fees also may be exempted based on income.

Tuition costs for private high schools vary, but students at private high schools may also be eligible to receive financial aid or scholarship allowances depending on income level. Furthermore, a student enrolled in a private high school located within Saitama Prefecture may also be able to receive a reduction in admission and course fees and other costs based

on income level and other factors.

You may also be required to pay into a fund for costs such as school trips and excursions and pay PTA membership fees. These fees are different for every school. For more information, please contact the school directly.

(3) Transferring Schools

After entering a prefectural high school, if a family moves to another address, the student can continue to attend their current school if they wish to do so.

However, if the student would like to transfer to a school closer to their new address, they will be required to take a transfer entrance examination. In this case, first consult with the student's current high school.

(4) Special Selection Process for Non-Japanese Students

There are special admission procedures for those who have only lived in Japan for a short time. These differ from the usual entrance examination procedures, so please consult with the schools which offer this special selection process.

12 schools offered this special selection for the 2024 school year (beginning April 2024). These schools were Iwatsuki High School, Soka Minami High School, Nanryo High School, Fukaya Dai'ichi High School, Wako Kokusai High School, Warabi High School, Kawaguchi Higashi High School, Kawagoe Nishi High School, Kurihashi Hokusai High School, Menuma High School, Niiza Yanase High School, and Misato Kita High School.

The schools which will offer special selection for non-Japanese students for the 2025 school year (beginning April 2025) are planned to be announced in July 2024.



Consultation and Inquiries

Office	Phone	Reception Hours
For inquiries about the special selection process for non-Japanese students: High School Education Management Division, Prefectural Schools Department, Saitama Prefectural Education Bureau.	048-830-6766	Mon - Fri (Excluding National Holidays and the New Year's Holiday Period) 8:30 - 17:15
For inquiries on transferring into prefectural high schools, and qualification certificates: Prefectural Schools Management and Personnel Division, Prefectural Schools Department, Saitama Prefectural Education Bureau.	048-830-6735	
For inquiries regarding the course and admission fees for prefectural high schools: Financial Affairs Division, Education and General Affairs Department, Saitama Prefectural Education Bureau.	048-830-6652 https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/f2204/j-s/index.html	

For inquiries about reduced course fees at private high schools: Private School Affairs Division, Department of General Affairs, Saitama Prefectural Government.	048-830-2725 https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/a0204/fubofutan2.html	
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4 Special Needs Schools

These are schools for students with disabilities who have special educational needs. There are elementary, junior, and senior high education departments that correspond to elementary, junior high and senior high schools (some schools also have kindergarten and technical departments). If you wish to enroll your child in an elementary or junior high school department, first discuss this with the local board of education of the municipality your child is registered as living in. If you wish to enroll your child in a kindergarten or senior high school department, please contact the Special Support Education Division of the Saitama Prefectural Education Bureau.

Special needs schools carry out education for students in accordance with their type of disability, including visual, aural, intellectual or physical disabilities, and students with a weak constitution.

(1) Kindergarten Department

Saitama Prefecture has established three special needs schools with kindergarten departments: Hanawa Hokiichi Academy (school for students who are visually impaired), Omiya School for the Hearing Impaired, and Sakado School for the Hearing Impaired. These programs are targeted towards children from the ages of 3 to 5 before they enter elementary school, and require a consultation prior to enrollment. All three schools also accept early education consultations for children from the age of zero (0). Early specialized education can lead to an improvement in visual and hearing impairments, so early consultations are recommended.

(2) Elementary Education Department

Children who will be 6 years old as of April 1, have a weak constitution or visual, aural, intellectual, or physical disabilities, and need special education assistance are candidates for entering an elementary school education department.

If you are hoping to transfer your child to an elementary education department, please contact your local board of education by the summer of the year prior to enrollment.

(3) Junior High School Education Department

Children who will be 12 years old as of April 1, have a weak constitution, or visual, aural, intellectual, or physical disabilities, and need special education assistance are candidates for

entering a junior high school education department.

If you are hoping to transfer your child to a junior high school education department, please contact your local board of education.

(4) Senior High School Education Department

Senior high school education departments feature either regular or technical courses depending on the school, so please contact the Special Support Education Division of the Saitama Prefectural Schools Department for more information. To enroll in a school, it is necessary to go through a selection process. It is necessary to have either graduated or expect to graduate from a Japanese junior high school or junior high school department in a school for special needs, or the equivalent.



Consultation and Inquiries

Name	Phone	Reception Hours
Special Support Education Division, Saitama Prefectural Schools Department, Saitama Prefectural Education Bureau	048-830-6880	Mon - Fri 8:30 - 17:15 (Excluding National Holidays and the New Year's Holiday Period)

5 University, Vocational School

In Saitama Prefecture, there are national and public universities and numerous private ones. There are also junior colleges and vocational schools.

Since the prerequisites and procedures for entering university or vocational school vary from school to school, please directly contact the institution you wish to enter.

The Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) offers information on universities and vocational schools and scholarships on its webpage.

Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) website:

<https://www.jasso.go.jp/index.html>

Information on study abroad in Japan:

<https://www.studyinJapan.go.jp/ja/planning/search-school/> (Japanese)

<https://www.studyinJapan.go.jp/en/planning/search-school/> (English)

6 Scholarships

There are scholarship systems for students advancing to senior high school, vocational school (technical school), university, junior college, or graduate school. The following chart lists the scholarships available in Saitama Prefecture.



Consultation and Inquiries

Scholarship	Contact	Reception Hours
Saitama Prefectural Senior High School Scholarship	Financial Affairs Division, Education and General Affairs Department, Saitama Prefectural Education Bureau 048-830-6652 https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/f2204/j-s/index2.html	Mon - Fri (Excluding National Holidays and the New Year's Holiday Period) 8:30 - 17:15
Part-time and Correspondence Education—Student Incentive Scholarship	High School Education Management Division, Prefectural Schools Department, Saitama Prefectural Education Bureau 048-830-6765	
Single or Widowed Parent Welfare Fund Scholarship	Birth Rate Policy Division, Department of Welfare, Saitama Prefectural Government 048-830-3204 https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/a0607/hitorioya/20230629.html	
Saitama Nursing Scholarship and Educational Loans	Medical Human Resources Division, Department of Public Health and Medical Services, Saitama Prefectural Government 048-830-3546 https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/a0709/ikueishougakukinn/index.html	
Saitama-ken Ishi Ikusei Shougakukin (Saitama Prefectural Scholarship for Aspiring Doctors)	Medical Human Resources Division, Department of Public Health and Medical Services, Saitama Prefectural Government 048-601-4600 https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/a0709/ishiikusei-shougakukin/	
Dr. Seiroku Honda Scholarship	Forestation Division, Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Saitama Prefectural Government 048-830-4310 https://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/a0905/hondashougakukinboshu2.html	

Other scholarship programs are offered by municipalities and private organizations. For further information, please contact the relevant municipalities, schools, and organizations.

7 Japanese Language Study

In Saitama Prefecture, you can learn Japanese at free Japanese classes conducted by volunteer instructors and at classes held at Japanese language schools. Please note that Japanese language schools charge fees.



Consultation and Inquiries

Office	Phone	Reception Hours
Volunteer-run Japanese Classes Saitama International Association	048-833-3296 http://www.sia1.jp/foreign/japanese/	Mon - Fri (Excluding National Holidays and the New Year's Holiday Period) 9:00 - 16:00
Japanese Language Schools The Association for the Promotion of Japanese Language Education	03-6380-6557 https://www.nisshinkyō.org/ (Information about Japanese Language Schools in Japanese, English, Chinese, and Korean)	Mon - Fri (Excluding National Holidays and the New Year's Holiday Period) 9:30 - 17:30

8 Japanese Language Proficiency Exams

There are examinations available to evaluate your Japanese ability.

Results of these examinations are useful when entering school or looking for employment.

For further information, please contact the respective organizations that conduct Japanese language proficiency examinations.



Consultation and Inquiries

Exam name	Contact	Hours
Japanese Language Proficiency Test https://www.jlpt.jp/	Japan Educational Exchanges and Services (JEES) Japanese Language Proficiency Test Center 03-6686-2974	Mon - Fri 9:30 - 17:30 (Excluding National Holidays and the New Year's Holiday Period)
J.TEST (Test of Practical Japanese) https://j-test.jp/	Association for Testing Japanese Proficiency / J.Test Office 03-5875-1231 j-test@gobun-ken.jp	Mon - Fri 10:00 - 17:30 (Excluding National Holidays and the New Year's Holiday Period)

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Exam name	Contact	Hours
BJT Business Japanese Proficiency Test https://www.kanken.or.jp/bjt/	Japanese Kanji Proficiency Test Foundation (a public interest foundation) 0120-509-315	Mon - Fri (Excluding National Holidays and the New Year's Holiday Period) 9:00 - 17:00