

# How One School in Tokyo Is Navigating a More Diverse Japan

外国にルーツを持つ子どもたちが増える中で、学校のあり方にも変化が見られるようです。東京・池袋にある小学校では、さまざまな背景を持つ児童がともに学ぶ環境が広がっています。言葉や文化の違いに向き合いながら、互いに理解を深めるための工夫も行われているのかもしれませんが。こうした取り組みは、子どもたちの学びにどのような影響を与えるのでしょうか。あなたはどのような教育が大切だと思いますか。



## 1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

At Ikebukuro Elementary School, a public school in Tokyo's Toshima Ward near Ikebukuro Station, roughly 30% of students come from foreign backgrounds. In response to this environment, the school has developed distinctive programs such as Japanese-language classes and an international understanding week.

According to the Immigration Services Agency, the number of foreign residents in Japan stood at 4.12 million at the end of last year, up 9.5% from a year earlier and topping four million for the first time.

As Japan's foreign population continues to grow, the school's efforts may offer one possible model for the future of education.

Continued on next page.

Source: How One School in Tokyo Is Navigating a More Diverse Japan

# 1. Article

On the afternoon of April 8, with cherry blossoms fluttering in the mild spring air, Ikebukuro Elementary School held its entrance ceremony in the gymnasium. Surrounded by parents, guests, and teachers, the new first graders sat in the center of the hall. Facing them, 36 second-year students stood in neat rows on a tiered platform and welcomed the newcomers in Japanese with messages such as, "Congratulations on your [enrollment](#)," "We couldn't wait to meet you," and "How are you feeling today?"

Nine of the second graders delivering those memorized lines were children with foreign roots who attend the school's Japanese-language class. Among the first graders listening intently were children from countries including the United States, Italy, and Nepal. In his address, Principal Masao Yamaguchi described the school as "a place where multicultural [coexistence](#) is part of everyday life."

Ikebukuro Elementary was established in 2005 through the merger of the former Taimei Elementary School and Ikebukuro No. 5 Elementary School, and is now in its 22nd year.

With a broad school district that includes the busy area northwest of Ikebukuro Station, home to many foreign residents, it is one of the schools in Japan with the largest share of children from foreign backgrounds.

While Chinese students once made up the majority of its foreign enrollment, the school has become more [diverse](#) in recent years, with children from countries including Nepal, the US, and Sweden.

One of the school's stated goals is to nurture children who respect different cultures and care for others. To help ensure that the roughly 30% of students with different nationalities and roots can learn and live together without barriers, the school has developed its own set of initiatives.

One of Ikebukuro Elementary School's most distinctive programs is its Japanese-language class, which helps children learn Japanese as the language used in the classroom.

At the introductory stage, students receive around 50 hours of instruction, usually during Japanese class periods and separate from their regular homeroom. There, they focus on the basics of the language, including grammar.

After that, they work through selected material from first-grade textbooks, gradually building up to lessons at their own grade level. Depending on their progress, students may [remain](#) in the program for up to four years.

# 1. Article

In the upper grades, as subjects become more specialized, the school also provides support beyond Japanese-language classes. Teachers go over difficult terms in simple Japanese beforehand to help students **grasp** the meaning before lessons begin. At present, six teachers work with about 50 children in the program.

"What matters most is helping children feel that school in Japan is enjoyable," Kuniko Yasui, who headed the Japanese-language class through the last school year, said. "But it is also important for their future to clearly teach them rules, such as the need to always meet deadlines for assignments."

The school's distinctive culture is also reflected in its schoolwide international understanding week, a weeklong event held three times a year. The main attraction is the international understanding festival, where children in the Japanese-language program introduce their home countries and sometimes perform dances in their traditional dress.

During recess, students can also try playground games from around the world in the gymnasium. The activity is so popular that participation sometimes has to be limited by grade level to keep the crowds under control.

The week also extends to school lunch. With help from the school nutritionist, students are served traditional dishes from different countries. "When food from their own country is served, the children happily say things like, 'The real thing is much spicier,' as they eat," Vice Principal Emiko Umetsu said. "It's a joy to watch."

At the same time, the school offers many chances to experience traditional Japanese culture. Students try activities such as koto, shamisen, flower arrangement, and kyogen. In one video shown to this reporter, children from China and Nepal were playing the traditional melody 'Sakura, Sakura' on the koto.

With the number of foreign residents in Japan continuing to climb year after year, Principal Yamaguchi said, "Our school is at the forefront. The next step is to share what we have learned in practice so that other schools can put it to use as well."

Vice Principal Emiko Umetsu added, "I hope children of foreign nationality can also grow up in Japan happily and with confidence."

Ikebukuro Elementary's efforts may offer a model for the future of education in Japan—and the school intends to keep building on them.

## 2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

### 1. enrollment 入学

Enrollment in community colleges has gone up for three years in a row.

### 2. coexistence 共存

The different ethnic groups in the country enjoy a peaceful coexistence.

### 3. diverse 多様な

New York City has a diverse population of people from many countries.

### 4. remain 在籍する

Most students remain in the course even though it quickly gets very difficult.

### 5. grasp 理解する

Some ideas in economics are difficult to grasp at first.

## 3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What programs has the school developed for its diverse students?
2. What kinds of activities are included for International Understanding Week?
3. What are the aims of the programs at Ikebukuro Elementary School? Please explain in your own words.
4. Why is it important for schools to support students from different backgrounds?
5. Do you think similar programs should be introduced in more schools? Why or why not?

## 4. 外国ルーツ児童が約3割の東京・池袋小 日本語学級や特別な給食で国際理解促進へ

東京・池袋駅に近い豊島区立池袋小では、外国にルーツをもつ児童が全校のおよそ3割を占める。こういった環境の中、同校は日本語学級や国際理解週間など特色ある取り組みを進めてきた。出入国在留管理庁によると昨年末時点の在留外国人は、前年末比9・5%増の412万人で初めて400万人を超えるなど、外国人が増加の一途をたどる中で、今後の教育における一つの指針となりそうだ。

桜の花びらが舞う8日午後、過ごしやすい春の陽気の中、体育館で入学式が行われた。保護者、来賓、教員に囲まれた新1年生が体育館中央に座り、その正面に設置された階段状の台に整列した新2年生36人が、祝いの言葉を贈る。

「皆さんが入学するのを楽しみにして待っていました！」「今皆さんはどんな気持ちですか？」

暗記したせりふを次々と話す彼らのうち9人は、外国にルーツを持ち、日本語を学ぶクラスに通っている。それをじっと聞いていた新1年生の中にも、米国やイタリア、ネパールなどから来た児童たちがいる。同校の山口正男校長は「多文化共生が日常的にできる学校」とあいさつの中で紹介した。

池袋小は平成17年に旧大明小と旧池袋第五小が統合して開校し、今年で創立22年目。外国人が多く住む池袋駅北西の繁華街も含む広い学区を持つ、日本で有数の外国ルーツの児童が多い学校だ。中国人児童が外国人の大半を占める時期もあったが、近年はネパールや米国、スウェーデンなど多様な国の児童が在籍するようになった。

教育目標の一つとして「多文化を尊重し、人を大切に作る児童の育成」を掲げ、約3割を占める国籍やルーツの違う子供たちが隔てなく過ごせるよう独自の取り組みを行っている。

同校の大きな特色が、教育言語としての日本語を学ぶ「日本語学級」だ。

学習初期の指導では50時間ほどかけ、主に国語の授業の時間に通常のクラスと離れて、日本語の文法などの基礎を学ぶ。その後は1年生の教科書から内容をピックアップして学習し、児童本人の学年の指導に追いつくことを目指す。習得度によって最大4年間在籍できる。

次頁に続く

出典：外国ルーツ児童が約3割の東京・池袋小 日本語学級や特別な給食で国際理解促進へ  
[Japan Forward](#)

## 4. 外国ルーツ児童が約3割の東京・池袋小 日本語学級や特別な給食で国際理解促進へ

また高学年では内容が専門的になることから、国語以外の教科でも、事前に難しい用語を、簡単な日本語で説明して、意味の理解を図るなどの支援も行う。現在計6人の教員が、50人ほどの児童を日々担当している。

昨年度まで日本語学級の主任を務めていた保井久仁子講師は「日本の学校が楽しいと思ってもらうことが大切。ただ『提出物の期限は必ず守る』などのルールをしっかりと教えることも将来のためになる」と話す。

全校的に行われる「国際理解週間」も、同校のこうした文化を象徴している。国際理解週間は年に3回、1週間かけて開催されるイベント。日本語学級に在籍する児童が、自らの母国について説明したり、民族衣装を着て踊りを披露したりする「国際理解フェスティバル」が目玉だ。休み時間には体育館で各国の遊びを楽しめるが、児童が殺到するため、学年ごとに制限するほどの人気ぶりだという。

また期間中は、栄養士の協力により、給食として各国の郷土料理がふるまわれる。同校の梅津恵美子副校長は「自分の国の料理が出ると、児童は『本物はもっと辛いよ』などと言いながら喜んで食べる。その光景がうれしい」と目を細めて語る。

一方で日本の伝統文化を学ぶ機会も多くあり、児童は琴や三味線、華道、狂言などを体験する。記者が見せてもらった動画では、中国やネパールの児童が琴で古謡曲「さくらさくら」を演奏していた。

国内の在留外国人数が年々増加の一途をたどる中、山口校長は「うちが一番先陣を切っている。この実践を今度は他の学校が使えるように伝えていかなければならない」と話す。梅津副校長は「外国籍の子も、日本で幸せにまっすぐ育ってほしい」。

これからの教育のモデルケースとなる同校の取り組みは続く。



出典：外国ルーツ児童が約3割の東京・池袋小 日本語学級や特別な給食で国際理解促進へ  
[Japan Forward](#)