

English Proficiency Rises as Japan's Students Clear Government Targets

英語を勉強していて、「前より話せるようになった」「聞き取れるようになった」と感じたことはありませんか。日本では、学校で学ぶ生徒たちの英語力が向上し、政府が目標とする水準を上回る生徒も増えていることが話題になっています。英語は、これからの時代にさまざまな人とつながるための大切な力の一つです。あなたは、英語力を伸ばすためにはどのような学びや経験が大切だと思いますか。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

An education ministry [survey](#) on English education released on June 18 revealed that more than half of junior high and high school students have surpassed the government's target English [proficiency](#) levels.

The government expects students to reach EIKEN Grade 3 by the end of junior high school, a level covering English for everyday situations, and Pre-Grade 2 or above by the end of high school, which includes writing basic essays and speaking in a face-to-face interview.

The Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education, approved by the Cabinet in fiscal 2023, sets a goal of having more than 60% of students meet these levels by fiscal 2027—and that target is now coming within reach.

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1. Article

According to the survey, as of fiscal 2025, 54.6% of junior high school students and 52.4% of high school students had surpassed the government's target levels. Among high school students, 23.9% had reached the [equivalent](#) of EIKEN Grade 2.

When the survey began in fiscal 2013, the rates were just 32.2% for junior high students and 31% for high school students. A ministry official remarked that "steady progress is being made in raising English proficiency in line with the Basic Plan."

English proficiency among teachers was also assessed. The share holding the equivalent of EIKEN Pre-Grade 1 or higher stood at 58.5% for junior high school teachers and 84.4% for high school teachers—up significantly from 27.9% and 52.7%, respectively, in fiscal 2013.

A ministry official noted, "Japan's English education tends to attract criticism, but this is evidence that many teachers in schools are working hard to improve their own English ability."

The survey also found a strong [correlation](#) between students' English proficiency and the degree to which Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs)—often native or near-native English speakers who support language instruction in Japanese schools—are involved outside of English classes.

Around 70% of high schools reported that their ALTs interact with students in non-English classes, school events, and club activities—and those schools tended to show higher student English proficiency. MEXT plans to use these findings to inform future ALT placement strategies.

The survey covered all public junior high and high schools and asked about conditions as of February 2026. It has been conducted annually since fiscal 2013, except in fiscal 2020, when it was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Special needs schools were included for the first time this year on an optional basis, but participation will be made mandatory for all such schools from the next survey onward.

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2. Key phrases and vocabulary

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

1. survey 調査

To improve our services at this hotel, we ask that you fill out this short survey.

2. proficiency 熟達

Daily practice helped Haruna reach a high level of proficiency in math.

3. equivalent 同等の

Our eight-week summer intensive course is equivalent to one full semester.

4. correlation 相関

Medical researchers have found a correlation between sleep and memory.

5. strategy 戦略

Part of my strategy for improving my French is to learn from my mistakes.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. How does the government measure English language ability in public schools?
2. What targets is the government aiming for in English proficiency for junior high and high school students?
3. How did English proficiency among teachers change between fiscal 2013 and fiscal 2025?
4. How is learning English to relevant to everyday life in Japan?
5. Besides school classes, what activities can help students become better at English?

4. 中高生の英語力、政府目標達成は半数以上 令和9年度までに6割へ

中高生の半数以上が、政府が目標とする英語力を上回っていることが6月18日、文部科学省の英語教育実施状況調査で明らかになった。卒業時点で中学生は英検3級相当、高校生は英検準2級相当以上の英語力を政府は求めている。令和5年に閣議決定した教育振興基本計画では、9年度までに中高生の6割以上がこの水準を超えることを目標に掲げており、達成が視野に入ってきた。

文科省の調査によると、7年度時点で中学生の54.6%、高校生の52.4%が政府の目標水準を上回った。高校生では23.9%が英検2級相当にまで達した。調査を開始した平成25年度時点の目標達成率は、中学生が32.2%、高校生が31%だった。文科省担当者は「基本計画を踏まえた英語力の底上げは着実に進展している」と述べた。

教員の英語力も調査対象となっており、英検準1級相当以上は中学校で58.5%、高校で84.4%だった。平成25年度時点の中学校27.9%、高校52.7%に比べて増加しており、文科省担当者は「日本の英語教育は批判にさらされがちだが、学校現場では自らの英語力を高めようと努力している先生が多い証左だろう」と語った。

また、外国語指導助手（ALT）による授業以外の関わり具合が生徒の英語力と深く関係していることも判明した。ALTが英語以外の授業や学校行事、部活動などで生徒と交流している高校は7割に上り、こうした学校ほど生徒の英語力は高い傾向が見られたという。文科省は今後、調査結果をALTの配置方法などに生かすという。

調査は全ての公立中学・高校が対象で、令和8年2月時点の状況を尋ねた。新型コロナウイルスの影響で中止した令和2年度を除き、平成25年度から毎年実施している。特別支援学校は今回から対象に含めたため回答は任意としたが、次回以降は全校に求めるという。