We are Friends from Today
(Junior High School)

~ Guide for Parents/Guardians of Children with Foreign Nationalities, Japanese Children Who Have Returned from Abroad, or Children in Similar Situations ~

Welcome to Yokohama

Japanese schools are probably different in various ways from those of your country. This guide will provide you with information so that you can more easily understand school practices and school life in Japan. If you have any questions, feel free to ask a teacher. We hope your child will enjoy his or her time with us.

February, 2015
City of Yokohama
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1. Japanese Schools

① Japanese educational system

Education is compulsory for the first nine years (from age 6 to age 15). Children whose sixth birthday is on or before April 1 enter the first grade of elementary school in April of that year, and continue there through the 6th grade.

Elementary school (6 years) – compulsory
Junior high school (3 years) – compulsory

High school (3 years)

University/college, junior college, technical school

Enter the workforce, etc.

◆ Grade level is based on the child’s age.
  (Children born from April 2 to April 1 of the following year are in the same grade.)
◆ Which school the child attends is based on where he or she lives.

② A typical year’s calendar at junior high school (Events and timing vary slightly from school to school)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Events and Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td><em>Shin-Gakki</em> (a new school term) starts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nyu-gaku-shiki (Entrance ceremony), Shigyo-shiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Ordinary classes and school events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>★Natsu Yasumi (Summer Vacation)★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Long vacation of about 30 – 40 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(From end of July to end of August)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Ordinary classes and school events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>★Fuyu Yasumi (Winter Vacation)★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>About two weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>(End of December to early January)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Ordinary classes and school events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Sotsugyo-shiki (Graduation ceremony), Shuryo-shiki (End-of-year ceremony)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>★Haru Yasumi (Spring Vacation)★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>About two weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>(From end March to early April)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>After the vacation, students advance to the next grade in April  (In principle, no students are held back or fail the year)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendance, lateness, leaving early

To go on to the high school of the student’s choice, proper attendance in junior high, being neither late nor leaving early, is important, along with academic records. Students should be sure to go to school without being absent except during long vacations scheduled by the school.

Regular tests

There are four or five regular tests per year to ascertain how much the student has learned. The results are a measure of academic performance, which have a major effect on admission to high school. Students should be sure to prepare adequately for these tests.

No failing

There is no practice of failing a grade in Japanese junior high schools even if academic performance is poor. Students advance to the next grade in April.
2. In preparation for entering school

① School uniform and belongings
Requirements for clothing (school uniforms), wear for physical education, shoes and school bags vary from school to school. Be sure to check with your school.

② Necessary expenses at school
There are no admission or tuition fees and textbooks are free at public junior high schools. Parents/guardians, however, must pay for study materials (other than textbooks), school supplies, field trips, school excursions and PTA memberships.

Expenses are paid automatically (basically monthly) from your account at a bank specified by the school. If you do not have such an account, it will be necessary for you to open one.

If family income is not sufficient to pay the expected expenses, a ✨School Expense Subsidy system is available. Please consult with the school.

③ Nyugaku-shiki (Entrance ceremony)
An entrance ceremony is an official event to welcome new first-year students. The students, their parents/guardians and teachers gather in the school gymnasium to celebrate the occasion. Parents/guardians should attend in appropriate attire, not everyday casual clothes.

Point 1

Some rules for junior high school!
- Go to school every day according to the school schedule and avoid being absent.
- Do your homework every day.
- Submit all required work including notes, prints, etc.
- Be sure to participate in classes and school events unless there is special reason.

Daily school life is important!
3. School Life

① Absence, lateness and leaving early
If a student is going to be absent or late, a parent/guardian should inform the school.

A parent/guardian should call the school or write the reason in the student handbook (seito techo) and apply his or her seal, and submit it to the school.

反驳

Try not to miss school
In Japanese schools, students should go to school unless they are in poor health. Without any special reason, do not miss school.
If a student does not appear at school, the school’s primary concern is whether a parent/guardian is aware of this.

◆ How to write

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>How to write</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>けっせき します</td>
<td>My child will be absent.</td>
<td>Kesseki shimasu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ちこく します</td>
<td>My child will be late.</td>
<td>Chikoku shimasu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>そうたい します</td>
<td>My child must leave school early.</td>
<td>Soutai shimasu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

◆ Reasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ねつ</td>
<td>My child has a fever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>きもちが わるい</td>
<td>My child feels bad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>はきけがする</td>
<td>My child is nauseous (or is throwing up).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>せき</td>
<td>My child has a cough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>かぜ</td>
<td>My child has a cold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>インフルエンザ</td>
<td>My child has the flu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>あたま が いたい</td>
<td>My child has a headache.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>みみ が いたい</td>
<td>My child has an earache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>は が いたい</td>
<td>My child has a toothache.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>けが を した</td>
<td>My child was injured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>びょういん に いく</td>
<td>My child will see a doctor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>おなか が いたい</td>
<td>My child has a stomachache.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

◆ Examples of “How to write”
Ex. 1: My child will be absent from school because he/she has a cold.
Kesseki shimasu. Kaze desu.
Ex. 2: My child will be late for school because he/she is going to see a doctor.
Chikoku shimasu. Byouin ni ikimasu.
Ex. 3: My child will leave school early because he/she is going to see a doctor.
Soutai shimasu. Byouin ni ikimasu.

Point!
Try not to miss school
In Japanese schools, students should go to school unless they are in poor health. Without any special reason, do not miss school.
If a student does not appear at school, the school’s primary concern is whether a parent/guardian is aware of this.

Point!
Please inform the homeroom teacher immediately in the following situations:
► When your home telephone number, cell phone number and/or address have changed.
► When your workplace or emergency telephone number have changed.
► When it has been decided that your family will leave Japan.

Point!
In the event of a large earthquake while students are at school
Students may remain at the school and parents/guardians may pick them up at the school.
Please contact the school in advance to learn how to respond when an earthquake occurs.
Subjects

Junior high school students study nine subjects: Nihongo (Japanese), shakai (social studies), sugaku (mathematics), rika (science), ongaku (music), bijutsu (art), hoken taiiku (health and physical education), gijutsu katei (crafts and home economics), and eigo (English). Each subject is taught by a different teacher.

There are four (five at some schools) teiki shiken (regular tests) annually, including mid-term and term-end tests. A week before each test, the scope of the test is announced. Students should prepare for the tests systematically.

At the end of each term, every student receives a seiseki-hyo (an academic record, also called a renraku-hyo). An academic record is an evaluation of the following: (1) results of regular tests, (2) daily behavior in class, (3) results of sho-testo (small tests between regular tests) and (4) the state of homework submission. Evaluations are on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 is best) or $A^0$, A, B, C, C (A$^0$ is best).

In Japanese junior high schools, there is no practice of failing a grade even if academic performance is poor.

Obento (Lunch box, usually home-made)

School lunches are not served at junior high schools, and there are no cafeterias. Students bring obento, usually made at home in the morning, and eat them at lunchtime at school. When preparing an obento, be sure that the items will last the day without refrigeration. If obento cannot be prepared at home, students can order them at school or buy them on the way to school in the morning. As for drinks, some schools ask students to bring their own water bottles, and others have bending machines available for their students. Please check this with the school.

Notes on preparing obento

Be especially careful about food poisoning in the rainy season

- Drain liquids well (wet foods spoil more readily).
- Do not pack hot and cold items together in a lunch box.
- Allow freshly cooked items to cool before closing the lid.
Soji (Cleaning)
Children clean the school after their afternoon break or after school. This is an important part of their education – classmates working together to clean the place where they study and play.

Bukutsudo (Club activities)
Club activities (bukutsudo) are one of the most important aspects of life in junior high school. Each student joins a favorite club and engages in activities after school or on school holidays under the guidance of a teacher. Students should try to participate fully. Before joining a club, be sure to check the club’s regulations, meeting schedule and expenses. Students should also talk with their parents/guardians.

- **Days of activities** • • • Usually after school from Monday to Friday. Some clubs meet in early morning before school and on Saturday and Sunday, go to training camps during summer vacation, or participate in larger sports events.
- **Expenses** • • • Each student pays as necessary, which may include club fees, travel expenses and the purchase of sporting goods, uniforms, etc.

- **Club activities** (the following are just a few examples of the variety available depending on the school)

  | Sports clubs                       |
  | Soccer, baseball, track and field, basketball, volleyball, tennis, table tennis and badminton |

  | Culture clubs                       |
  | Art, brass band, drama, science and handicrafts |

Health
- **If a child gets sick or is injured at school**
  Attention and first aid are provided in the school nurse’s office (hoken-shitsu). If necessary, the school will contact a parent/guardian, who may be requested to come and pick the child up. The school has no oral medicines available.

- **Health examination**
  The school conducts health examinations including check-ups by a general physician, dentist and an ear, nose and throat specialist. There is also urine analysis, etc. (sample brought from home).

Part of education
Cleaning and club activities do not have academic curriculums, but they contribute to the sound growth of the students in school and in life.
4. School Events and Parents’/Guardians’ Involvement

① *Shizen-kyoshitsu* (Outdoor activity program) and *shugaku-ryoko* (school excursion)
There are outings in each grade that extend overnight or for a few days. *Shizen kyoshitsu* is for junior-high first-year students (second-year students at some schools) and *shugaku-ryoko* are for third-year students. These are important educational activities that help deepen friendships through spending time together in nature and visiting historical sites. If there are concerns about expenses, meals during a trip, bathing, etc., be sure to consult with the teachers.

**Learning the importance of cooperation through group activities**
*Shizen kyoshitsu* and *shugaku-ryoko* are not vacations, but educational activities. In Japanese school education, harmony and unity of the class are important. In principle, all should participate.

② *Jugyo sankan* and *gakkyu kondan-kai* (Visit to school by parents/guardians and meeting with homeroom teacher)
Parents/guardians visit schools to observe how their children are doing in class. Afterward, a meeting with homeroom teacher (*gakkyu-kondankai*) is often held, where the homeroom teacher talks about the teaching/learning situation, the children and their school life as a whole. Please be sure to attend.

③ *Katei homon* (Home visit)
The homeroom teacher visits the home of each of his/her students to talk with a parent/guardian about the student’s life at school and at home. Each visit is about 10 – 15 minutes. The homeroom teacher will explain this in writing (letter) in advance. If necessary, an interpreter can be requested at school.

④ *Kojin mendan* and *Sansya mendan* (Individual meeting/educational consultation)
This is an individual meeting at school between a parent/guardian and a homeroom teacher, sometimes with the student present, to talk about educational issues, but can also address personal problems and worries. *Kojin mendan* take place at a specified time and day. The homeroom teacher will explain this in writing (letter) in advance. You may ask the school to arrange an interpreter. Please be sure to attend.

**Point!**

Ask anything you want to know! Share your concerns, etc.!
Class visits, individual meetings, teacher’s home visits – each is a good opportunity to talk with the teacher. Class visits, individual meetings, teacher’s home visits – each is a good opportunity to talk with the teacher. In order for children to enjoy school, parents/guardians must take an active interest their child’s schoolwork, hopes for going on to high school, etc., and must work together with the school to encourage and support the child.

**School volunteer interpreter**
You may ask for an interpreter when you talk with teachers in individual meetings, home visits, etc. Please consult with the school.
PTA activity
PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) is an association for parents/guardians and teachers. When a child enters school, his/her parent/guardian becomes a PTA member. Board members are chosen from among the members. There are different committees.

5. Future course

After completing three years of compulsory education at a junior high school, students have to decide their future course. It is important to start thinking about this, including going on to high school, during the first year of junior high school. Kojin mendan (individual meetings) in the third year are important in that one's actual future direction is being decided based on academic performance, etc. Parents/guardians are urged to participate in the meetings.

1. Going on to high school

Ninety-eight percent of junior high school students go on to high school in Japan (survey in 2014). In order to go to high school, students have to pass an entrance examination. It may be difficult for a foreign student to pass an entrance examination given only in Japanese. There are, however, high schools that provide entrance examinations accommodating foreign applicants, and others that affirmatively admit foreign students. Please, therefore, do not give up on going to high school merely because you do not understand Japanese. Talk with your teacher and look for a school where you may be accepted.

2. Getting a job

In Japan, children are permitted to enter the normal workforce after they have completed compulsory education. As a practical matter, however, opportunities in that circumstance are very limited.

Entrance examinations accommodating foreign students (public high schools in Kanagawa Prefecture)

◆ Special Admission for Prefectural Foreign Residents, etc

There are high schools that encourage applications by foreign students who have lived in Japan for less than three years (with limited Japanese ability), including any years studying in a Japanese elementary school. There are ten such schools in Kanagawa (three of them in Yokohama).

Quota for admission: 4 – 15 students per school.
Admission is based on taking an examination in three subjects (Japanese, English and mathematics), and an interview.

◆ Consideration given to foreign students taking achievement tests (see next page)

For students who have lived in Japan less than six years, hiragana is added to kanji (Chinese characters) on question sheets and the time allowed for taking the test is 50% longer. This special treatment is requested via the junior high school where the applicant is enrolled.

③ Types of high schools and expenses

There are public and private high schools.

Public high schools in Japan also charge tuition (as do private high schools).

In addition, at public high schools, about 200,000 yen is needed for the first year for admission fees, school uniforms, textbooks, study materials and excursions. Amounts will be higher for private schools. Please consult the school about necessary expenses. Please also check commuting costs.

There are scholarships for high school students (applications should be made during the third year of junior high) and a system to reduce the burden of paying tuition at private high schools. There are also schools where a student can attend school and also work during the daytime. Please consult with a teacher as to any concerns about expenses.

◆ Types of high schools

High schools are classified into the following three types:

1) Zennichi-sei (Full time): Students study during the daytime on weekdays. Most high schools are in this category. Students finish school in three years.

2) Teiji-sei (Part-time): Students go to school at night (from 5 – 9 p.m.), or during the day. Students attend classes while working. It usually takes three to four years to complete such a program. Costs are less than for full-time attendance. The graduation qualification (“high-school graduate”) is the same as from a full-time school.

3) Tsushin-sei (Correspondence-course): Students study mostly at home through correspondence. Students must submit many reports, requiring a lot of effort. A few times a month, on Sundays or holidays, students attend class in person and take examinations. Expenses are less than for full-time or part-time schools. The graduation qualification (“high-school graduate”) is the same as from a full-time school.

④ High school entrance examination

Entrance examinations are held in February.

Admission is based on three factors: 1) chosa-sho (confidential school report), 2) gakuryoku kensa (achievement tests) and 3) mensetsu (interview).

1) Chosa-sho (Confidential school report): This is a document submitted by the junior high school to the high school. It contains academic records for the second and third year of junior high school and a description of the student’s activities at school (attendance, club activities, student council activities).

2) Gakuryoku kensa (Achievement tests):
   • Zennichi-sei: Five subjects: Nihongo (Japanese), shakai (social studies), sugaku (mathematics), rika (science), eigo (English).
   • Teiji-sei: Basically three subjects: Japanese, mathematics and English.
   • Tsushin-sei: Mensetsu (interview) or sakubun (essay).
     (No achievement tests are given.)
3) *Mensetsu* (Interview): The interviewer may speak simply and slowly so that a foreign interviewee may understand.

5 **Choosing a high school**

The goal should be to choose a high school that matches your child’s interests and where he/she will be able to study in a way that leads to a future career. It is best to choose three or so schools, taking child’s academic performance, school location, club activities, etc., into consideration. Also important is whether the school offers any support for Japanese language study, *toridashi-jugyo* (tutoring outside of class).

Each school holds an orientation session. Parents/guardians and students should attend this session and obtain information. Attending the session will also be helpful for the entrance-examination interview.

**Guidance for high school entrance**

Multicultural Education Network Kanagawa (ME-net) holds high-school entrance guidance sessions for students whose mother tongue is not Japanese.

http://www15.plala.or.jp/tabunka/

**What you can do from now to prepare for going to high school**

- **First year:** Try to keep regular hours in your school life. Make a habit of studying at home. Investigate potential future job and necessary study for them.
- **Second year:** Actively participate in club activities and school events. Think about future jobs based on actual experiences.
- **Third year:** Accumulate good memories of junior high school. Select high schools based on visits and explanatory events the schools hold for applicants and parents/guardians, and so on.

**Daily school life is important!**

- Do not miss classes.
- Do not be late.
- Do your homework every day.
- Do not fail to make required submissions (notes, prints).

Doing steadily the things you should obviously do is a practice that will serve you well in society.

**To families [Parents/Guardians]**

When you talk with your children about their future, please try to listen to them and take the time to understand the direction they want to go in, rather than imposing your hopes on them, or worrying about what would be most convenient for you as parents/guardians.
6. To Those Becoming Junior High School Students

You may find many things different from what they are in your own country. The following are some examples of rules in Japanese schools.

We hope you will adjust yourself to your Japanese school as quickly as possible so that you can more fully enjoy school life.

① Commuting to school
◆ Go to school every day according to the school’s time schedule and do not be being absent.

◆ If you will be absent, late or will have to leave early, **be sure to inform the school.**
  Ask your parent/guardian to call the school in the morning with the reason, or write the reason in your student handbook, with the seal of your parent/guardian, and submit it to the school. Similarly, if you cannot attend PE class because of sickness or injury, show your handbook with the reason and seal to the PE teacher.

◆ Once you arrive at school, you should not leave the school premises until it is time to go home.

② Clothes, etc.
◆ Students wear winter uniforms when the academic year begins on April 1. They change to summer uniforms on June 1, and back to winter uniforms on October 1. Changing clothes according to the season is called **koromogae.**

◆ Hair coloring and permanents are not allowed.

◆ Accessories, pierced earrings, make-up and nail polish are not allowed.

③ Lunch
◆ Students bring their own **obento** (lunch) every day. They may buy lunch on their way to school. They may also order **obento** at school in the morning.

④ Other
◆ Do not bring anything to school that is not necessary for school. (Ex., large sums of money, cell phone, games, comic books (manga), snacks and the like).

◆ Write your name on all of your belongs with an oil-based ballpoint or felt-tip pen.

◆ School may be canceled for the day if there is a typhoon or heavy snow. This will be the case if an **official warning (kei-ho)** – storm warning or heavy snow warning – is in effect at 7 o’clock in the morning. (Note: A **kei-ho** (warning) is different from a **chui-ho** (advisory); school will not be canceled for an advisory.) Be sure to monitor weather reports on NHK TV (channel 1). Then please stay at home, as it may be dangerous to go out.

Note: In Yokohama, there will be no school if a **bofu kei-ho** (storm warning) or **oyuki kei-ho** (heavy snow warning) is issued, but there will be school in the case of an **oame kozui kei-ho** (heavy rain and flood warning).
7. Various support organizations

Various school and regional support activities are available to support study by children with foreign nationalities, children who have returned from abroad, and so on.

① International class
An international class is established at elementary and junior-high schools where there are many students with foreign nationality.
A teacher works closely with children needing help in the Japanese language or in other subjects where they are having difficulty. He or she also works personally with any child to help the child acclimatize himself or herself to the Japanese school environment. Similarly, if a parent/guardian needs an interpreter or a full explanation of something they do not understand, they may ask for help at the international class. Where there is no such international class, please ask the homeroom teacher.

② Japanese-language classes offered by Yokohama
There are classes for students who do not understand Japanese. Students living in Naka Ward go to classes in Minami Ward. Applications are made by the school.

③ Native-language volunteer support
The city of Yokohama can send a volunteer native language speaker to school to help your child adjust to school life and to study. Inquire at the school and the school will apply for you.

④ Volunteer Japanese classes
The Naka International Lounge offers Japanese classes for adults, taught by volunteers. Some of these classes, in addition, accept students from junior high schools. For details, please contact the Naka International Lounge: (045) 210-0667.

⑤ Organizations available for educational consultation

1) Naka International Lounge  http://nakalounge.main.jp/
CERTE Building 6F, 3-33, Masago-cho, Naka-ku, Yokohama (North Exit of JR Kannai Station).
→1st FL. of Naka Ward Office Annex, Nihon Odori 34, Naka-ku, Yokohama (Next to Naka Ward Office)

Consultation and information are available in multiple languages (English, Chinese and Japanese).

Parents/guardians who do not understand Japanese sufficiently are advised to visit the lounge before talking to school officials about entrance procedures and so on.
Tel: (045) 210-0667; Fax: (045) 224-8343
Open: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday and Saturday)
Naka International Lounge will be moving back to its original building in the middle of March. Because of the moving, we are closed between March 13th and 17th IN 2015. From March 18th, we will be back to the 1st floor of Naka Ward Office Annex, Located next to the main building.

2) Minami Shimin Katsudo Tabunka Kyosei Lounge

Urafune Sogo Fukushi Shisetsu 10F, 3-46, Urafune-cho, Minami-ku, Yokohama 232-0024
(5 minutes’ walk from the Municipal Subway’s Bandobashi Station; 10 minutes’ walk from the Keihin Kyuko Line’s Koganecho Station.

Consultation and information in multiple languages (Chinese, English, Thai, Tagalog and Japanese), and professional consultation on laws, residence status and education, are available.

Parents/guardians who do not understand Japanese sufficiently are advised to visit the lounge before talking to school officials about entrance procedures and so on.

Tel: (045) 232-9544 (Japanese)
(045) 242-0888 (Other languages)
Fax: (045) 242-0897
Open: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
3) Yokohama Association for International Communications and Exchanges (YOKE)
http://www.yoke.or.jp/

Yokohama International Organization Center 5F, Pacifico Yokohama, 1-1-1, Minato Mirai, Nishi-ku, Yokohama 220-0012

Professional consultation in the areas of laws, residence status and education are available.
Tel: (045) 222-1209
Fax: (045) 222-1187
Open: Monday – Friday: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. / 12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
2nd and 4th Saturdays: 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

4) Earth Plaza Educational Consultation for Foreigners
http://www.earthplaza.jp/forum/foreign_education/

Information Forum, Kanagawa Plaza for Global Citizenship (Earth Plaza) 2F, 1-2-1, Kosugaya, Sakae-ku, Yokohama 247-0007
Tel: (045) 896-2970 (Japanese)
(045) 896-2972 (Other languages)
Fax: (045) 896-2894

5) Multicultural Education Network Kanagawa (ME-net)
http://www15.plala.or.jp/tabunka/

Patio Fuki, Room 403, 4-50-4, Urafune-cho, Minami-ku, Yokohama 232-0024
Tel: (045) 516-8911
Telephone consultation: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Fax: (045) 516-8911
e-mail me-net@jcom.home.ne.jp

6) SHINAI — JYUKU ; Support Center For Foreigner’s Education And Life
http://www6.ocn.ne.jp/~k13sin19/

101, 1-1-12, Nakamura-cho, Minami-ku, Yokohama 232-0033
Tel: (045) 252-7862
Fax: (045) 252-7862
e-mail sin.ai19@crocus.ocn.ne.jp
We are Friends from Today
(Junior High School)

~ Guide for Parents/Guardians of Children with Foreign Nationalities, Japanese Children Who Have Returned from Abroad, or Children in Similar Situations ~

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