

Expanding future possibilities

Hirakū

37



★Kinder Kids Academy Nishinomiya School Opening

★Parental Survey Results Announcement

★Preschool Teacher Training in Canada ★Voices of Tomorrow Speech Contest



Kinder Kids Academy Nishinomiya School Opens!

In January 2025, Kinder Kids International Academy Nishinomiya School officially opened as the first Academy School in the Hyogo area. From the very first day, the campus has been filled with the smiles of energetic children. Surrounded by a natural environment and equipped with state-of-the-art educational facilities,

Nishinomiya School has provided a joyful start for students to form new friendships and bond with approachable teachers. To ensure convenience for families, a school bus service covering major areas is in operation, offering a secure and comfortable commuting option for parents.



NISHINOMIYA SCHOOL OPEN!



Engaging with Nature in a Dynamic Schoolyard

Our schoolyard features a space where children can pump water with a hand pump and let it flow into the sandbox for immersive mud play. Children can create small rivers and ponds with water and sand, enjoy the texture of mud, and connect with nature, nurturing creativity through play. Through these activities, the five senses are stimulated, providing valuable moments where children develop resourcefulness and feel their connection with nature.

The rooftop playground is covered entirely with artificial turf and equipped with large play structures, allowing children to run freely and safely in a spacious environment. Our "dual playground", which offers diverse experiences in both the ground-level and rooftop playgrounds, fully supports children in their healthy growth.



Expanding Learning Horizons in the Theater Room

Our school is equipped with the latest ICT educational tools, providing an environment where children can engage in learning with a forward-thinking perspective. In the theater room, projection mapping technology is used to display visuals on the walls, offering an immersive experience that feels like stepping into the world of the images. Children can vividly explore the deep sea, outer space, and historical events, feeling as if they are truly there, fostering knowledge and creativity through curiosity and discovery.



Theater room utilizing projection mapping technology



Makiko Takahashi,
Branch Manager of
Nishinomiya school

Message from the Branch Manager

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the warm support we have received upon the opening of Kinder Kids Academy Nishinomiya School. It brings me great joy to witness children spending their time here fully and unlocking their infinite potential.

Our schoolyard features a spacious environment where children can learn through **free play**, including a mud pond, wooden deck, and gardening area. On the wooden deck, children can read picture books under the sunlight, nurturing their imagination in a relaxing outdoor setting that differs from the indoor environment. In the gardening area, children experience the joy of harvesting vegetables they've grown themselves and using them in cooking, gaining **valuable experiences** that foster gratitude for nature's blessings. Additionally, the theater room, the first of its kind in Kansai, offers adventurous experiences that **transcend time and space**. It allows children to explore the mysteries of the deep sea, the vastness of space, and eras ranging from the age of dinosaurs to the distant future. This curiosity about unknown worlds sparks new wonders and discoveries.

We are committed to warmly supporting each child as they grow while embracing their individuality. Please visit our campus to experience the wonderful environment and see the smiles of the children firsthand.

Nishinomiya
School HP



A Location Balancing Disaster Preparedness, Culture, and Nature

Our school is conveniently located an 8-minute walk from JR Nishinomiya Station and a 9-minute walk from Hankyu and Hanshin Imazu Station. Nearby is the spacious Tsuto Central Park, which not only serves as a play area for children but also functions as a disaster preparedness park, providing a sense of security as a regional evacuation center in times of emergency. Additionally, at Nishinomiya Shrine, children can experience the lively atmosphere of the "Toka Ebisu" festival and gain valuable opportunities to connect with traditional culture and local history, such as the Horai Sansui-style garden, which was landscaped during the Muromachi period.



Tsuto Central Park,
which also serves as
a disaster preparedness park





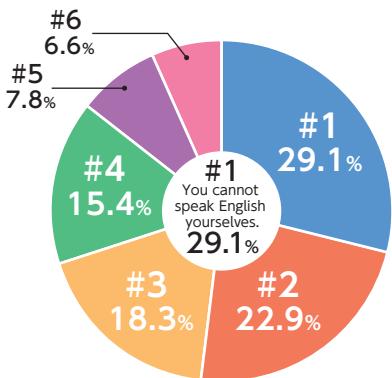
Turning Parents' Voices
into Future Strength

Kinder Kids Parent Survey Results Announcement

From October to November 2024, we conducted a parental survey, gathering valuable feedback from 2,065 respondents out of a total of 4,019 children enrolled across all Kinder Kids schools. In this issue of Hiraku, we share a selection of these results. Based on the insights and opportunities identified through this survey, Kinder Kids is committed to further improving our childcare and educational programs.



What was the main factor
in your choosing
Kinder Kids?

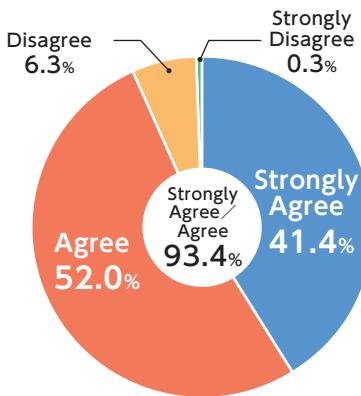


- #1 ■ You cannot speak English yourselves.
- #2 ■ You liked the atmosphere of the school.
- #3 ■ You agree with the Kinder Kids Philosophy.
- #4 ■ You think being fluent in English is advantageous for entrance exams or at school.
- #5 ■ We live nearby.
- #6 ■ The school was recommended by parents of an enrolled student/graduate.

Many parents chose Kinder Kids because of their own challenges in learning English, wishing to provide their children with an environment where they can naturally become familiar with English from an early age.



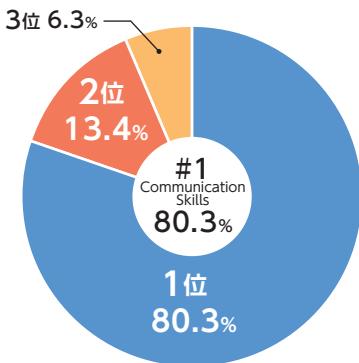
My child looks forward to
going to school.



Over 90% of parents believe their children look forward to going to school.



The Most Important
Aspects of
Learning English

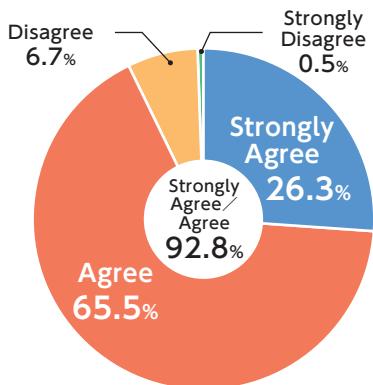


- #1 ■ Communication Skills
- #2 ■ Good Pronunciation
- #3 ■ English Literacy Proficiency

Parents consistently consider communication skills to be the most important aspect of English education at Kinder Kids, a trend that remains unchanged year after year.



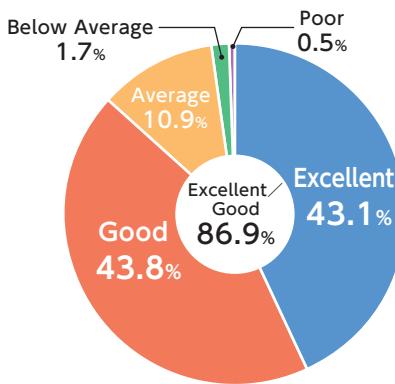
Guidance given to learn about human relationships, social interactions and rules learned through play and daily life.



Over 90% of parents feel that the school effectively teaches social skills, rules, and interpersonal relationships through play and daily activities.



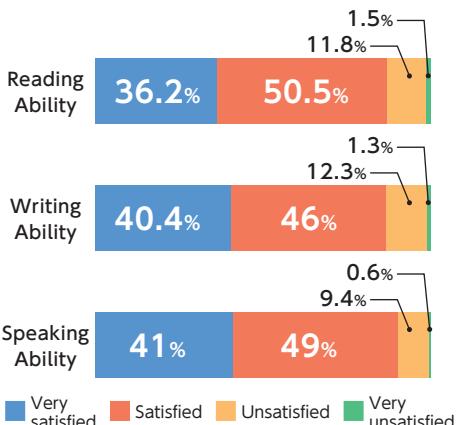
I believe that the overall quality of Kinder Kids teachers at my child's school is:



Over 85% of parents believe that the overall quality of the teachers at their child's school is either excellent or good.



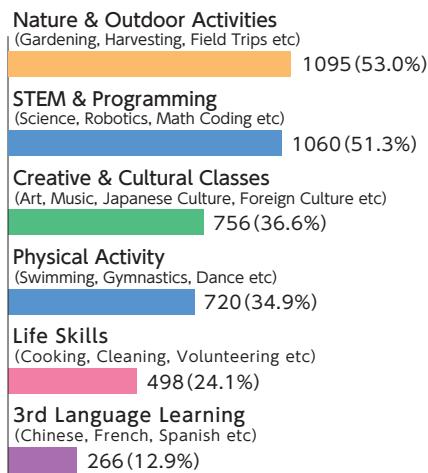
Satisfaction with English Reading, Writing, and Speaking Skills



Satisfaction levels across all categories of English proficiency have significantly improved, now reaching pre-COVID levels. Although there was a temporary decline during the pandemic, satisfaction has strongly rebounded.



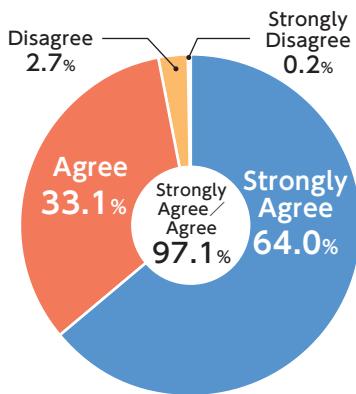
Besides English, which of the following six skills/classes do you believe is the most valuable and would like to see more of at Kinder Kids?



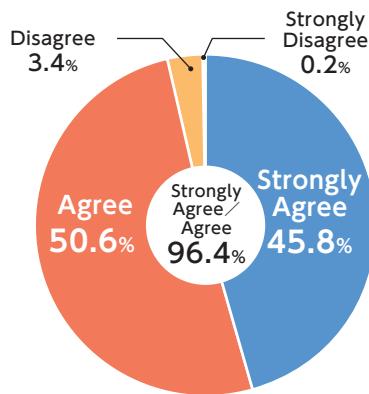
Nature and outdoor activities, along with physical exercise, are the two main areas that parents would like Kinder Kids to focus on more. Over half of the respondents expressed their desire to see these areas further emphasized in the curriculum."

Q

My child feels close to their class teachers.

**Q**

I (Parent) have a good relationship with my kids' class teachers.

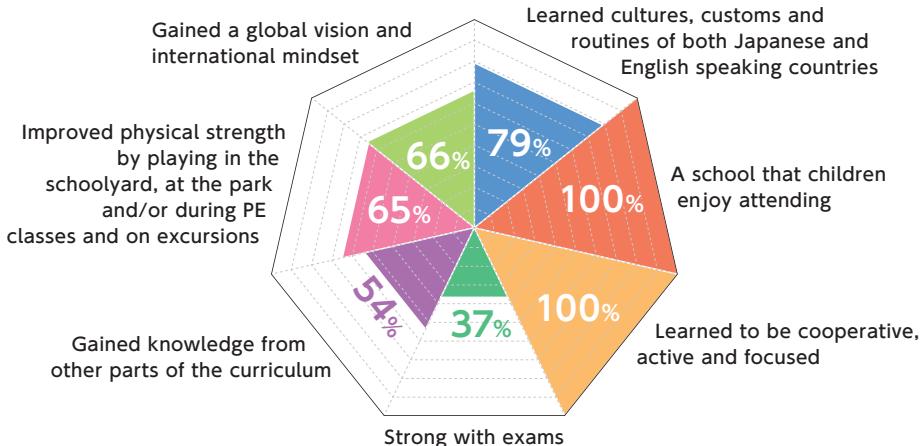


The results indicate that most parents have a good relationship with their child's class teacher, which aligns with the finding that children feel close to their teachers. This consistency highlights the high regard parents have for Kinder Kids teachers as warm and friendly.

Q

Traits Parents Expect vs. Traits Kids Develop at Kinder Kids

We asked parents about their expectations for Kinder Kids and the skills their children have developed. This graph shows the percentage of children who have acquired the skills parents expected from Kinder Kids.



For example, among parents who view "acquiring English skills along with Japanese culture, customs, and manners" as a key feature of Kinder Kids, 79% believe their children have successfully developed these skills.

Heartwarming Feedback from Parents

We received numerous words of praise from parents through the survey. Here are some of the most representative comments.



Teachers Full of Warmth and Compassion

The warmth, professionalism, and care of the teachers are evident, making us feel secure in entrusting our children to them.

Support That Fosters Confidence and Growth

Thanks to the teachers' support, my child has gained confidence.

Joy in Attending School and Motivation to Learn

My child looks forward to attending school, and I can see improvements in their English and other skills.

Improved Social Skills and Confidence

My child has developed social skills and gained the ability to express their thoughts confidently.

A Curriculum Balancing Education and Fun

I am satisfied with the curriculum, which strikes a great balance between education and enjoyment.

• • • • • Challenges and Future Initiatives • • • • •

While we received many positive comments about the curriculum and childcare services, we also heard valuable feedback and requests regarding efforts to improve speaking skills, enhance cleanliness and tidiness within facilities, and ensure accurate and clear communication.

We take this feedback seriously and will develop concrete action plans to address these areas and implement them promptly. We remain committed to deepening trust with parents and striving to provide the best possible environment for your children.



For detailed survey results and improvement plans, we encourage you to visit Kinder Plus.





Preschool Teacher Training in Canada

Report



This year, Kinder Kids preschool teachers once again visited Clarkson and Oakville Schools in Canada, where they gained valuable experiences and insights from their visits.

Their exposure to different cultures and educational environments fostered new awareness and personal growth.

Here, we share the experiences and reflections of six teachers who participated in this invaluable program.



We had a great time there!



[Nishinomiya Kitaguchi School] Asuka Okamoto Training Period: September 5–25, 2024

I gained new insights into teaching methods for children whose native language is English and innovative approaches to circle time. Additionally, observing how the “Question of the Day” theme encouraged natural communication within small groups helped me appreciate the effectiveness of station learning.

On the other hand, I was pleased to learn that Japanese children’s excellent life skills and independence are highly valued overseas, which reaffirmed the strengths of Japanese education. I aim to leverage these experiences to further enhance the quality of childcare in our program.



[Yao School] Ayaka Yamaguchi Training Period: September 5–25, 2024



I was deeply impressed by the children cooperating as they challenged themselves to climb trees, discussing which branches to climb next. It was inspiring to see how outdoor activities involving calculated risks fostered both their independence and greater confidence.

I also observed an environment that respects the unique characteristics of children with special needs and provides tailored support, which I found valuable. Building on these experiences, I aim to implement childcare practices that support the growth of each child and make their school life even more enriching.

[Tokyo School] Midori Iwagami Training Period: September 5–25, 2024

I was impressed by the emphasis on allergy management, safety protocols, and creating an environment that fosters children's independence. During station learning, I observed small groups of children engaging in natural conversations and teaching one another. I was really impressed by the flexible activity plans that were tailored to each child's needs.. Additionally, I found mindfulness techniques, such as deep breathing and calming practices, that could be applied effectively in Japan. The educational approaches in Canada offered many valuable insights that can enhance the childcare environment in Japan.



[Tennoji Yuhigaoka School] Miho Ishizuka Training Period: September 26–October 18, 2024



I gained a deep appreciation for the importance of providing inclusive support tailored to the unique characteristics and needs of children growing up in a multicultural society. I was particularly impressed by the use of visual support cards and handmade tools, helping to build a sense of security and confidence in children with special needs. The availability of relaxation spaces, where children can spend time at their own pace, was also deeply insightful. I hope to apply these learnings in Japan to create a more flexible childcare environment that respects diversity and meets the needs of all children.

[Fukuoka School] Urara Yamaguchi Training Period: September 26–October 18, 2024

I was impressed by how the entire staff showed creativity in their work to benefit the children, which helped foster a calm atmosphere and build trust with the parents. One notable difference I observed during the daily circle time was that children actively shared their opinions, which is quite different from practices in Japan.

The training provided new perspectives and solutions to challenges I had faced in regular childcare, which was incredibly rewarding. Looking ahead, I will strive to implement these learnings in my own class to provide an even better school experience for the children.



[Shinagawa School] Mao Kikuchi Training Period: September 26–October 18, 2024



I was deeply impressed by how the children in Canada took an active role in their own learning. One particularly memorable moment was during phonics activities, where the children chose their own words and were fully immersed in the games using those words.

Additionally, the dormitory experience provided opportunities to connect with peers from across the country, allowing us to exchange valuable insights about the strengths of our respective schools and childcare practices. Weekend visits to local attractions provided enriching opportunities to experience local culture, making the three weeks both fulfilling and educational.

This experience has become a significant asset for my growth as an early childhood educator, and I look forward to applying what I have learned in the future.



The Stage:
The Foreign
Correspondents'
Club of
Japan!

Voices of Tomorrow

SPEECH CONTEST



2024



This year, the speech contest was held under its new name, “Voices of Tomorrow Speech Contest”, at the prestigious venue of FCCJ (The Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan). Renowned for its long history, FCCJ is an international hub where journalists from both Japan and abroad gather.

In this exceptional setting, participants confidently expressed their thoughts in English, captivating the audience and judges alike. Among the six winners, four—including the Champion—were students from Grad Club. We interviewed them about their challenges, growth during the contest, and aspirations for the future.



Achieving consecutive victories in the Kansai contest and earning the top title in both Kansai and Kanto is an incredible accomplishment!

While balancing school and cram school homework, I worked hard to memorize difficult words and practice my speeches. Although it was sometimes challenging, I believe my consistent effort led to this wonderful result. When my parents told me, “The Foreign Correspondents’ Club is an amazing place!” I felt excited to stand on this stage and motivated to try even harder. Having the opportunity to test my abilities among external participants also made this experience feel very special.

For my speech, I focused on the importance of helping others, based on my volunteer work with the “Rwanda Rescue Team.” I delivered each word with heartfelt emotion, hoping my message would resonate with the audience. I aim to become the champion again next time and hope my younger sister also earns a prize. This year, I couldn’t join the Australia program due to entrance exam preparations for junior high school, but next year, I plan to participate with my sister to further improve my English skills.



My son has participated in the Kansai contest every year, earning Grand Prizes and category awards, but this year’s Voices of Tomorrow Speech Contest was a particularly special stage. My father-in-law, a member of the Press Club, once told me that “just entering the venue is difficult,” so seeing my son deliver his speech in such a prestigious setting filled me with emotion. The judges were also highly accomplished individuals, and I am deeply grateful that he had the opportunity to gain such a valuable experience. During the preparation period, my son not only practiced diligently and creatively but also encouraged his sister after her speech, saying, “R, your speech was great!” even though she didn’t win a prize. In that moment, I saw a glimpse of him growing into a more supportive older brother. Through this experience, my son has developed a greater love for speaking in front of others and gained confidence. I hope he will continue learning English at Grad Club and excel in various fields in the future.

Winner



From His Mother



I felt honored that my son had the opportunity to take on a challenge at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, a venue with a long history in journalism. Seeing him happily present on the Voices of Tomorrow stage reassured me. During the preparation period, he worked hard to find creative ways to deliver his speech in a way that would entertain the audience, receiving advice from Grad Chat teachers along the way. Through this experience, I believe he gained significant confidence in the belief that "if you try, you can succeed." Moving forward, I hope he continues to develop his ability to express his feelings in words and communicate effectively in ways that suit his audience, all while remembering to stay grateful and strive for growth.

Winner (Kansai & Kanto)



From His Mother



I was deeply moved to see children confidently delivering their speeches in such a historic venue, visited by many renowned figures over the years. The competition level was very high, and it felt like a truly special contest. My daughter was disappointed with her performance at the Kansai contest due to nerves, so this time, I encouraged her to stay calm and do her best. With occasional class suspensions due to health concerns, we also paid close attention to her well-being. Through this experience, I noticed her making thoughtful improvements in pronunciation and speech structure, as well as developing the confidence to express her own ideas. Her dreams may change in the future, but I want to provide her with as many opportunities as possible so she can fully pursue whatever she is passionate about.

Winner (Kansai & Kanto)



From His Mother



Seeing my daughter confidently and happily deliver her speech on the special stage of Voices of Tomorrow was incredibly reassuring. During the preparation period, she would practice her speech as if singing, and it was clear she was enjoying herself. The anticipation and support from our family created an encouraging atmosphere, which I believe motivated her even further. Through this experience, I feel she gained confidence by performing as usual, even in a different environment. I hope she continues to develop both her academic skills and emotional resilience while taking on new challenges in the future.

A triumphant first trophy after a Kansai contest comeback!

I was thrilled to receive the long-awaited trophy after continuing to practice diligently from the Kansai contest through to the Kanto contest. I was amazed by the FCCJ venue, which felt like the "center of Japan," and it was an invaluable experience. I chose the piece There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly because it seemed fun and easy to memorize. During my presentation, I focused carefully on pronouncing "swallow" clearly, and for the scene where the old lady dies, I even choreographed a fall for myself. Next time, I'll aim to become the champion!

Dream Sparks: Boldly Share What Ignites Your Imagination

I was very happy to win the Winner title in both the Kansai and Kanto contests. The stage at FCCJ was low and close to the audience, which made it easier for me to present without feeling nervous and perform just as I had practiced. The theme of my speech was a dream I've had since my time at Kinder: "Creating eye drops that restore vision." The words came to me quickly when writing my speech. During my presentation, I focused on looking around at the audience to ensure my message was delivered clearly. I'll continue to practice hard and aim to become the champion in the next contest!

A moving speech about a dream discovered in Los Angeles

I felt truly honored to deliver my speech at the special venue of FCCJ. The theme of my speech was My New Dream Found in Los Angeles. I fell in love with the friendly atmosphere of Los Angeles during my visit and wanted to share its charm with the audience. In the first half of my speech, I focused on the fun and vibrant aspects of Los Angeles, while in the second half, I encouraged the audience to think about some of its serious issues. I put great effort into using my tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language to convey my emotions effectively. For the next contest, I plan to refine my techniques further and aim for the ultimate goal of becoming the champion.

Cover: Craft “New Year Shrine and Mochi Pounding”

Under a bright blue sky, children are joyfully pounding mochi in front of a shrine adorned with a grand torii gate and ema plaques.

The ema, inscribed with wishes and dreams, create a warm atmosphere of celebration for the beginning of a new year.

The children’s smiles and the energetic way they pound the mochi are particularly striking, embodying the joy of participating in traditional Japanese festivities.

Each ema reflects heartfelt aspirations, inspiring a sense of hope and vitality for the year ahead!

We look forward to your ideas!

“Hiraku” provides useful information
and the latest news related to
English and childhood education.

- Your recent interests
- Topics you want us to cover
- New content etc etc...

If you have ideas to contribute,
please share these with us!

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