

English-Japanese Bilingual Primary School in Victoria

The Victorian Government, which respects and supports multiculturalism, is committed to foreign language education. Japanese language has also become one of the popular foreign languages due to the influence of anime and manga and is taught in many primary schools. Two of these, Huntingdale Primary School and Caulfield Primary School, are bilingual primary schools with 50/50 Japanese and English classes. Both primary schools are located in the suburbs of Melbourne, the former in the City of Monash and the latter in the City of Caulfield.

Recently, I was invited to a Harmony Day event at Huntingdale Primary School. The students were dressed in a variety of costumes, paraded and played musical instruments, and they sang and danced lively and happily. According to Ms Ruth Biddle, Principal of Huntingdale Primary School, the number of children applying to their school is increasing not only because one of their parents is Japanese, but also because more and more parents with no connection to Japan are sending their children to the school. Huntingdale Primary School has 410 students and about 10 teachers are Japanese and another 10 are Australian. On the day, two Grade 6 school captains gave us a school tour in fluent Japanese. The two are said to be able to speak four languages each - in addition to Japanese and English, Indonesian and Chinese, and Farsi and Greek, respectively. In October, Grade 5 and 6 students are planning to go to Japan to visit their sister school, Kuramochi Primary School in Nabari City, Mie Prefecture. I hope that the students will continue to study Japanese language and become bridges that connect Japan and Australia.

A week after my visit to the school, I had the opportunity to meet The Hon. Steve Dimopoulos, Minister for the Environment and Sports, who represents the Oakleigh District (the school's district). When I mentioned my visit to Huntingdale Primary School, Minister Dimopoulos said he also knew Principal Biddle well and had been invited to several events at the school. He also said with a smile that the school is an excellent 50/50 Japanese-English bilingual school and a source of local pride, and that the state government will continue to support the school. Mr Dimopoulos gave a speech on behalf of the Victorian Government at the Emperor's Birthday Celebration Reception in February 2022, and we have had a good relationship ever since. As a big fan of Japan and a strong supporter of Japanese language education, I hope that Minister Dimopoulos will continue to support Huntingdale Primary School in the future.

