

Q&A

Q: My child is still wearing diapers (such as training pants). Is that okay?

A: Yes, that's perfectly fine. Please bring extra training pants in advance. We will gradually begin toilet training as we move toward summer. As your child becomes more capable, we will slowly transition them to regular cloth underwear. This effort should not be limited to kindergarten; we expect families to work together with us at home as well.

Q: My child has a lot of likes and dislikes when it comes to food, and it's becoming a problem.

A: Eating together can help children overcome their dislikes. We often see children eating foods they usually dislike when they grow the vegetables themselves or help cook the food. At our kindergarten, lunch is optional. Since it's a flexible system, you can either pack a lunch from home or order the kindergarten lunch. Orders can be placed on the morning of the same day. The lunches we provide are nutritionally balanced, so we encourage you to make use of them. At the end of each month, we distribute the menu for the following month.



Q: There are no small children in our neighborhood. I'm worried because my child hasn't had much interaction with kids of the same age.

A: The way children play changes as they grow older. At age 3 (the first year of kindergarten), they build trust with their homeroom teacher. At age 4, they start forming friendships with help from teachers and other adults. By age 5, playing with friends becomes the main focus. Even if your child struggles to interact with others at first, they will gradually learn how to play together.

Q: My child will not be going to the same elementary school as other children. Is that a problem?

A: Even parents who were worried about this before their child started school have not reported any issues afterward. Children quickly become friends with each other, so our staff is not concerned. Through our childcare program, we teach children how to express themselves and say things like, "Let's play together!" so they can confidently reach out to others.



Q: I would like to use the school bus. How far does the bus travel for pick-up and drop-off?

A: If the location is already included in the current bus routes, it is no problem. For other locations, please consult with us directly. If the distance is too far, it may result in an excessively long ride, and we may not be able to include it in the route. In that case, we ask that you provide your own transportation. If you can arrange your own transportation, you may enroll regardless of where you live.

Bus routes are reviewed annually, so the same route and schedule will remain fixed for the entire school year—morning and afternoon times will not change.

For children enrolling mid-year, if their location is along an existing route, we can add a new bus stop along that course. However, we cannot change the roads the bus travels on, so we ask for your understanding.



Q: With the new free preschool education policy, how much do we need to pay each month?

A: Tuition is free under the early childhood education subsidy program. The monthly fee paid to the kindergarten covers air conditioning/heating costs, facility and equipment maintenance, enhanced educational materials, PTA fees, and picture book fees. The total monthly cost is ¥8,080.

Q: I heard the uniform hasn't changed since the school opened. Is that true?

A: Yes, it's true. The fabric of the blazers and skirts (or pants) was changed the year after the school opened, but there have been no major changes since. The gym uniform changed from long sleeves to short sleeves, and the blouse (polo shirt) for the uniform was slightly updated, but the older versions can still be worn. If parents of new students are former graduates, they may use the uniforms from their time.

Q: Will children be taught how to read and write before entering elementary school?

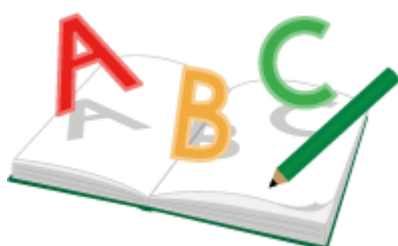
A: The best time to teach children is when they show interest. The most important thing is figuring out how to spark that interest. We incorporate numbers and letters into play. Four-year-olds (middle class) become familiar with numbers, while five-year-olds (older class)

become more accustomed to letters. Our kindergarten uses “Gifts (恩物)” as part of our educational materials, which are truly wonderful. These were developed by Friedrich Froebel, the founder of the first kindergarten in the world, based on principles from nature. Through play and these “Gifts,” children experience mathematical concepts and aesthetic beauty in design.

Q: Does the kindergarten offer English lessons?

A: Just as Japanese language development begins with *hiragana*, English starts with the alphabet (ABC), and the appropriate time to learn each depends on the child's stage of development. At Pinocchio Kindergarten, *hiragana* instruction begins in the final year (age 5–6), and alongside that, we also begin teaching the alphabet (ABC) at that age.

Younger children (ages 3–5) are exposed to English through music and movement-based activities, helping them learn words naturally. In these early years, children *experience* English, and in the final year, they *learn* it as a language.



Q: I want my child to participate in the overnight camp, but I'm worried about them being away from home.

A: The overnight camp is arguably the most important event at Pinocchio Kindergarten. In the second year after our opening, we held our first overnight camp at Iizuna Highlands in Nagano Prefecture. At the time, we invited staff from the Iizuna accommodation to hold an information session for parents to help them feel comfortable.

It must have taken great courage for those parents to send their young children all the way to Nagano for the first time. When we ask our alumni, they often say it was one of their most memorable experiences. During the Iizuna mountain hike, children walk all the way to the top on their own feet, often encouraging one another along the way.

This event helps them develop inner strength—*doing their best through their own efforts, working together with friends to overcome challenges*. They graduate with hearts that are stronger because of it. We strongly encourage you to let your child experience this valuable opportunity.



Q: Why does the kindergarten keep injured birds that cannot fly?

A: The director of Pinocchio Kindergarten is also the director of a senior care facility in Fukaya City called Flower Villa. Through their volunteer work in the protection of injured wildlife, the director has received authorization from Saitama Prefecture to temporarily care for wounded animals and birds.

Those who can safely return to the wild are released; others that cannot survive on their own continue to be cared for long-term. Currently, Flower Villa is caring for wild birds such as the varied tit and mallard ducks, as well as raccoon dogs. A raccoon dog was recently released back into the wild in cooperation with the Saitama Prefecture wildlife team, and it occasionally returns to visit Flower Villa.

At the kindergarten, we have taken care of birds like turtle doves and rock doves, and have previously looked after species like Japanese pheasants and herons. We involve the children

in caring for these animals, with the hope of nurturing compassionate, kind-hearted individuals.

Q: Once my child enters kindergarten, I would like to return to work. Is that possible?

A: Absolutely. Our kindergarten offers extended childcare (before- and after-hours care) for enrolled children. Although we cannot offer this care when your child is ill, we can look after your child from 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

With the exception of Sundays, the Bon holiday, New Year's, graduation and entrance ceremonies, orientation days, overnight camp days, and graduation field trips, this service is available almost every day.

We do not offer extended care on event days such as open class days or sports day, but in the case of sudden school closures due to typhoons or heavy snow, we do provide extended care. If there is a scheduled closure when extended care is not available, we will inform you about it one to two months in advance.

During summer, winter, and spring breaks, even elementary school students may use the service.

If a child in extended care requires special assistance, we ask that you consult with the kindergarten in advance so we can arrange appropriate support staff.

Q: Are there any workshops or fun events for parents to enjoy or learn from?

A: Yes. There are lectures organized by associations such as the Saitama Private Kindergarten Federation, which interested parents are welcome to attend. These lectures offer valuable insights on parenting and child development from expert speakers.

Q: I heard there's an exchange program with a kindergarten overseas—is that true?

A: Yes, we have begun an exchange program with a royal kindergarten in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. We are currently in discussions to establish a sister-school relationship. Materials about our kindergarten are being translated into English so they can be shared internationally. Children's smiles are universal. The bright, clear eyes and shining smiles of children in Indonesia are just like those of the children at Pinocchio Kindergarten. We're confident they'll become great friends.

Thanks to modern technology such as the internet, communicating with people overseas is now easy, and the world feels much closer.



Q: Who named the kindergarten “Pinocchio”?

A: The current director chose the name “Pinocchio” with the hope that children would grow up to be energetic, strong, and kindhearted. The name reflects the wish for each child to live a life that suits them—to follow their own unique path.

We have sent off many graduates over the years, all with their own unique personalities.

They are thriving in many areas of society, including sports, entertainment, culture, and the arts, making use of their individual talents.

Over the years, we’ve collected many Pinocchio-themed items—dolls, paintings, decorations, ornaments, and more. We plan to display these regularly.

We hope the name “Pinocchio Kindergarten” will remain in your hearts forever.