

News and Notes

'Article One' international school prepares to open in Makuhari New City

Makuhari International School, which caters for Japanese returnees, dual nationals and foreign children aged between 3 and 12 (in their initial year), is due to open in April 2009 in Chiba Prefecture's waterfront development, Makuhari New City.



Paul Rogers

It is the first fully recognized international school in the prefecture, and the first international school in Japan to be fully supported by the Japanese government and recognized under Article One of the Education Law.

"Among other things, having Article One status allows Japanese children to transfer more easily to Japanese junior high schools after leaving Makuhari International School — if that is their wish," explained Paul Rogers, founding head of school. Rogers was previously head of school at St. Michael's International School in Kobe.

Because of the financial benefits of being an Article One school, Makuhari International School can

offer substantially reduced tuition fees. "In some cases, our fees are up to half those of similar schools in Tokyo, even though we believe we will be offering better resources in some areas," said Rogers.

The status also influences the curriculum, which is fairly unique. "We will be following the objectives of the Japanese curriculum. However, this is only our basis. In reality, we will expand on these, as well as supplement them with objectives and content from various other curricula. This will make our curriculum extremely rich and diverse, and of course very universal in flavor," Rogers explained.

"And how we teach will be very international, in terms of teaching styles as well as the teachers we employ," he continued. "For example, children can learn better in different ways, whether this is visually, orally or kinesthetically. Because we understand this and consider it to be so important, the teachers we employ have to hold the same beliefs and understanding. Those educators will be native English teachers, working abroad, who are experienced and know how to teach in a variety of different

styles," he said, adding that he planned to initially interview prospective teachers in November in the United Kingdom. "Employing the right teachers will be the most important thing that I can do before next April. We can spend millions of yen on wonderful physical resources and have a beautiful school, but that doesn't matter without the right staff."

And the school will have impressive resources and facilities. Buildings, including a large multipurpose hall and media center, have been designed to be light and spacious. Modern resources such as wireless laptops and interactive smart boards, as well as excellent outside playground equipment, and furniture and teaching resources largely from the U.K., will create an international learning environment. Outside there are various areas, including a nature study area, rolling hills in the kindergarten section, a large grass field, a gardening area and a courtyard connected to the media center, where children can go outside to study.

"These outside resources will always be an important part of our

environment — we have no intention of expanding on this site," said Rogers. "Our school size will never be more than 400 children, which is a really nice number. For us the most important thing is quality, not quantity."

The establishment of the school has been much anticipated by Makuhari residents as well as those farther afield, and the school will no doubt help to provide a much-needed educational facility for international residents in the area.

"Having a good school here is extremely important. Children and their futures are usually the most important consideration for families when they move to an area. Hopefully, we are a reassurance to those families as well as an attraction," said Rogers. "However, ultimately, our aim is to be recognized as the best international school in Japan. A school of choice and not of convenience. We want people to come here because we are a wonderful school and not because we are the only choice."

For more information about the school, visit www.mis.or.jp or contact (043) 296-0277.