

## Message from an Alumna

**Aika Sasaki**  
(Heidi)

Takamori Friends Club  
41st Graduating Class

I graduated from Takamori High School in 2019 and started living in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, the following year, four years ago. I am currently studying as a third-year student at the Faculty of Medicine at Charles University, which is the top-ranked university in Prague.

My experiences at MeySen Academy have had a great influence on my choice of life today. I remember that on days when we had Friends Club, I couldn't wait for my Japanese elementary school to end, so that I could go to MeySen. Events such as the Jamboree Party and Friends Day, which I could not have experienced at my Japanese school, also left a strong impression on me and are treasured memories. I am also grateful for the friendships that I made at MeySen. I still get together with many of my MeySen friends and even take trips with them.

I have wanted to become a doctor since I was a child, with the dream to study medicine abroad. Being exposed to foreign cultures at MeySen, sparked my interest in foreign universities.

Every day, I think about how grateful I am for the English education I received at



With schoolmates in internal medicine and pathology class

Nursing practice in white gown

MeySen, and how that education has brought me this far. If I had not attended MeySen, I would not be studying medicine in Prague. The listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills I learned in my MeySen English classes have benefited me greatly, not only in class and for exams, but also in making friends.

From my third year at Charles University, practical training classes have gradually begun, and in the Surgery-Internal Medicine practical training, I have observed surgeries and actually communicated with patients in simple Czech while performing examinations, which has helped me to gradually realize that I will become a doctor, and I am enjoying my studies.

I have three years left until I graduate. As you can imagine, studying medicine is a difficult journey, but I am aiming to find joy in all the hard work, and will continue working hard until achieving my goal to become a doctor.



Charles University, founded in 1348  
(photo: Faculty of Medicine building)



Shaking hands with the principal at the graduation ceremony

## Bible verse

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

聖書  
せいしょ

## Greetings for the New Year

MeySen Academy's 58th year has begun. Last year, we were able to get through the school year safely with God's grace and help, and with the understanding and cooperation of our parents. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. We have reflected on our shortcomings and will continue to strive hard this year to do work that pleases everyone, while seeking wisdom from God.

Friends Club and Premier Elementary, which had previously operated six days a week, have made a major change in moving to a five-day week starting in April. Our Kindergarten departments are also working to improve work styles and reduce workloads, and we hope that teachers will get enough rest so that they can show even more smiles and love to the children.

2024 began with the Noto Peninsula earthquake on New Year's Day, reminding us of the Great East Japan Earthquake 13 years ago. Thinking back

to 2011, it was such an incredibly difficult time for the entire region, and some of the victims in the earthquake and subsequent tsunami were our students' parents. In recent years, the global pandemic has had a major impact, and the school's activities have been affected to some extent. We cannot predict what tomorrow will bring, and looking at many of the current events happening around the globe, it is easy to become anxious or fearful. However, there is someone who knows everything and foresees everything. It is God, who created the heavens and earth and gives us life every day. People who rely on and trust in God can maintain a steadfast peace in their hearts no matter what the situation.

Since last year, I have been talking about MeySen's vision for education, and this time I will talk about the last pillar: "Hope and Peace." I hope you will read this as well.

We hope that 2024 will be a peaceful year for both the school and your families. All of our faculty and staff will work hard every day to care for the children, who are precious gifts from God, with all our hearts, so we appreciate your continued support.

## MeySen's Educational Vision

The ideal image we aim for

So far, we have introduced five pillars of the vision of education that aims at children's "independence" and "future happiness," but this time we will focus on the last one: "Hope and Peace."



Daniel Fanger,  
Principal

- Vision**
- 1 誠実さ Truth & Integrity
  - 2 ことば Language & Expression
  - 3 社会性 Social Development
  - 4 自発性 Initiative & Creativity
  - 5 精神力 Strength & Perseverance
  - 6 希望と平安 Hope & Peace

### Hope & Peace

The thoughts behind this pillar are that each child should

- Know that life is precious and that you are created in the image of God
- Know that you are loved by God
- Have the hope of forgiveness of sins and eternal life

And it is also about developing a sense of self-affirmation that comes from the above. Have you ever thought about where you came from, why you exist, what will happen to you in the future, and what will happen to you after you die? If you don't know the meaning or purpose of life and just spend your life in limbo, you will likely have no hope or peace about the future, and you will likely develop anxiety and fear. On the other hand, knowing the correct answers to these questions will give you a sense of purpose in life, and hope and peace in your heart.

#### • A precious life created in the image of God

Every person is a precious being. The Bible says that when God created the heavens and earth, he finally created humans in his own image. Humans, unlike other animals, were given not only bodies but also souls, and were able to commune with God. The first

humans had no trouble or worries, talked with God every day, and lived in joy. There was no sin, no death. However, they were seduced by the devil and sinned, and as a result, this world was cursed, and suffering and sorrow entered into it. Since then, humans all over the world have opposed God, become prisoners of "sin" and bound by the fear of "death."

#### • The path of salvation and hope

It was natural for humanity to be destroyed because we rebelled against God's love and grace, but God loved us and provided a way for us to be saved. God's only begotten Son became human and sacrificed his life on the cross, taking our place and bearing our sins. Through this, anyone can receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

<1 John 1:8-9>

All we are asked to do is humble ourselves, admit our sins against God, repent, and accept the salvation of Jesus Christ. Through confessing our sins and believing in Him, our sins are forgiven, and we are cleansed from all unrighteousness.

#### • Peace and comfort

Those who believe in Jesus have the promise of eternal life, so when our earthly life comes to an end, the start of our true and eternal life begins, as we enter a heaven of wonderful joy. The Bible says the following about heaven:

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

<Revelation 21:3-4>

Life is full of painful, difficult, and even terrifying things, but if you have the Creator of everything in the universe and the One who controls all events on your side, you can truly feel at ease. I sincerely hope that both the children and their families will walk through life with the hope and peace that comes from trusting in God.

## Watercolorist and Illustrator

### Taku Furuyama

MeySen's campus maps and picture books for the kindergarten reading lessons are made with watercolor paintings by illustrator, Taku Furuyama. We are also in the process of replacing the artwork of the Bible stories which we show our students, with new illustrations by Mr. Furuyama. The first artwork we asked Mr. Furuyama to create was our kindergarten's campus maps, some 20 years ago. Since then, Taku Furuyama's paintings, with their gentle lines and colors, have become an integral part of MeySen's education. We spoke with Mr. Furuyama, who held his 70th anniversary solo exhibition in March, about his creative activities for MeySen.



Taku Furuyama

Painter, illustrator, and picture book artist. Majored in ancient Western history in the Department of History at Tohoku Gakuin University. After working as an animator, printer, and for an advertising production company, established the watercolor and illustration production atelier "Lands' End."

Gallery "atelier ARTIO"



Originally, when I went to university, I intended to become a museum curator, but there were no job openings, and I found a job as an animator instead. After that, there were twists and turns, and I found myself on the road to becoming a painter. Various connections and experiences intertwined to make me the painter I am today.

I believe that illustrating for MeySen's picture books is a meaningful job because it allows me to be indirectly involved in the children's emotional education. I draw with the hope that when they grow up, my illustrations will remain somewhere in their memories. I feel strongly that the Bible story illustrations will be "very much a part of the children's future," and I am very happy that they will be etched in the memories of the children at the school.

Painting landscapes in watercolor is another one of my jobs. My feelings and approach are completely different from when I paint for a story in a picture book.

What is important to me when painting landscapes, is how to express the emotion I feel at the moment I encounter the landscape.

On the other hand, artwork for picture books is about how to support the text of the story. We place the highest priority on how we can best convey what we want to convey in the text to the children. We also consider the impact when the page is turned. Therefore, I use a variety of angles and compositions. In my mind, creating illustrations for picture books is similar to making a movie.

## Friends

「読む」とつながる。「読む」とひろがる。

Friends is the MeySen Academy newsletter and publishes the latest news on everything that is happening at MeySen Academy, from Kangaroo Club to High School and MeySen Alumni. You can read it on our website too.

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# Friends

フレンズ

## Spring 2024

「読む」とつながる。「読む」とひろがる。

MeySen  
Newsletter  
No. 206





# New Personnel Structure

There have been some personnel changes in both the Takamori Kindergarten Department and Maruyama Premier School. We will continue working hard to provide the best possible education for our students.

Takamori



**Ikue Abe**  
Director of Takamori Kindergarten

I have been working at MeySen Takamori Kindergarten for 16 years. I was a homeroom teacher for seven years and have also worked as a safety staff, daycare staff, assistant homeroom teacher, and most recently as the assistant to the Director of Takamori Kindergarten Department. From April, I will be taking over the Director position.

As a mother of three children, I hope to fully utilize my experience as a parent and a teacher, to do my best to bridge any gaps between the parents' expectations and the teachers' efforts, so that we can work together in the education and growth of our kindergarten students.



**Yayoi Saito**  
Director of Preschool Program

As the former Director of the Takamori Kindergarten Department, I have met many children and their parents, and I am very grateful for the wonderful early childhood education we provide.

From the start of the school year, in my new role as the Director of the Preschool Program, I will do my best to promote MeySen Kindergarten and hopefully make it more accessible to families who are interested in enrolling in MeySen Kindergarten in the future, by holding events and classes where they can feel free to visit and experience MeySen Kindergarten for themselves!



We welcome all preschool children to join us in celebrating their birthday at MeySen Kindergarten, for their birthday month!



From the left  
**Maruyama Friends Club Miki Stratford**  
**Maruyama & Takamori Friends Club Yuko Takahashi**  
**Takamori Friends Club Mei (Julia) Akama**

Maruyama



**Ruth Furr**  
Director of Maruyama Premier School

Greetings! I have been working at MeySen since 2020. Before that, I worked as a Director of Christian Education for eight years in the United States. I moved to Japan with my husband, Joseph, who is a Friends Club teacher. I'm so grateful to God for the opportunity to serve the families at MeySen and in our wider Sendai community!



**Emily Harrison**  
Maruyama Premier School Kindergarten Head Teacher

Hi, I'm Emily and I am an alumna of MeySen Kindergarten, Friends Club, and the High School program! After graduating from high school in Japan, I attended and graduated from an American university, where I worked hard on my studies and also continued improving my English ability. I have been working and teaching English at MeySen since 2012, starting out as a Premier School assistant, and then taught in Kindergarten and Friends Club, before becoming a supervisor in the Friends Club program. I'm very excited to be back in Premier School!

## Friends Club Assistants

In addition to the homeroom teachers and other staff, there's an essential position at MeySen, called the Friends Club Assistant. Their job is to support the students in case of illness or injury, to translate when there is something the students cannot communicate in English to their homeroom teacher, and also to communicate with the parents for the homeroom teachers who do not speak Japanese.

To our first grade students who are new to Friends Club, please feel free to reach out to our Assistants anytime you have a problem or have difficulty communicating in English. We are excited to help you!

## Unique Classes at Premier Elementary

At Premier School Elementary, students learn about biology, geography, physics, chemistry, environmental issues, and much more in English at each grade level.

G1 - G6 students, we hope you enjoy this year of unique learning with your classmates, that you cannot experience anywhere else!

### Examples of our unique projects

#### G1 (1st grade) Developmental Biology

Developmental biology is the study of the process by which an organism develops from an egg to an adult. In our G1 classes, the students place fertilized chicken eggs into an incubator and observe their growth by candling the eggs (shining a light "through" the egg, to see the growing embryo inside). Watching the growth of the embryos, and then seeing the baby chicks begin to break through their shells and emerge, gives our first graders the feeling of being a proud parent! Documenting their observations in a journal in English helps them learn new vocabulary and improve their writing skills.



#### G4 (4th grade) Electricity, Magnetism, and the Environment

In our G4 classes, students learn about electricity and magnetism by building circuits and making electromagnets. Students learn the principles of how machines work by supplying energy and the importance of conserving electricity to protect the earth's natural resources.

They also engage in discussions on how to protect the environment's soil, air, and water; conduct a composting experiment where they carefully observe and document the formation of nutrient-rich soil by making compost from food scraps; and create posters about solutions to waste disposal, environmental destruction, animal habitat destruction, air pollution, and more.



## Leaders In Training Program After One Year of Activities



The first year of the "Leaders in Training Program," in which students learn communication and leadership skills by participating in the management of MeySen events as interns, has come to an end. What did the junior and senior high school students who were selected to become interns feel about the program? Activities for the 2024 school year will soon begin for our new LIT members! If you see any of our LIT students wearing their blue t-shirts at the MeySen events, please feel free to say hello!



**Taiga Chiba (Jay)**  
2023 graduate of Takamori High School

I had always been interested in helping out at MeySen events, so the LIT program was very appealing to me. Since this was my last year enrolled in MeySen, I was very happy to be selected as an LIT member!

I think the appeal of the LIT program is that through the activities, you can communicate with a variety of people, including teachers, and improve your English skills at the same time. I could speak English in a different way than in class and made new friends.

The activities that the LIT participants engage in are definitely a plus. Every year around February, there are openings for new members for the new school year, so I hope that lots of new high school students are interested in applying!



**Honoka Terashi (Esther)**  
Takamori High School 9th grade

While helping at the Friends Day store, I had the opportunity to interact with many people, from small children to elderly people. At first, I was a little uncomfortable talking to strangers, but I have come to enjoy interacting with people more than before.



## Premier Elementary Graduates Surpass 500

On March 16, a graduation ceremony was held for the Premier Elementary G6 students. Dressed in purple caps and gowns, the students were full of joy and pride after eight years of hard work and accomplishment, as they marched up to the stage to receive their diplomas.

Eighteen years have passed since the establishment of Premier School in 2006, and the number of graduates from Premier Elementary has just exceeded 500 in this past graduation ceremony in March 2024.

We sincerely hope that the Premier School students who have graduated from MeySen will find their own paths and continue to learn and grow, and that they will take advantage of any future encounters where they can use their English to communicate with others.



## High School Celebrates 25th Anniversary

MeySen High School celebrated its 25th anniversary this past school year! When the program was established in April of 1999, it was called "ESL Class" but was later renamed to MeySen "High School."

After graduating from Friends Club, our junior and senior high school students enrolled in the High School program attend classes twice a week, despite their busy schedules which include their Japanese school and club activities, to continue to learn and acquire practical English skills.

**Duration:**  
MeySen High School begins in October of the first year of junior high school, and concludes with a graduation ceremony in March, at the end of the second year of high school

**Classes:**  
Twice a week on Monday & Thursday or Tuesday & Friday  
20:05 - 21:00

**Capacity:**  
About 12 students per class

The homeroom teacher's main goal is encouraging their students to speak as much as possible.



**From Mr. Peter, Head Teacher Maruyama High School**

The High School program uses the National Geographic Learning publication "TIME ZONES" for the first three years of junior high school and "Interchange" from Cambridge University Press for the first two years of high school. Both materials are designed to improve conversational skills while learning relevant vocabulary and grammar based on themes that are age-appropriate and interesting for high school students.

After the homeroom teacher completes a basic explanation of the theme, students speak one-by-one with the teacher, or in pairs with other students. A significant amount of class time is devoted to giving the students opportunities to speak in English, and we push them to express their opinions and thoughts with confidence. At the same time, they will also improve their English accuracy by having their homeroom teachers point out grammar and pronunciation errors and teach them natural expressions.

The High School program also offers a three-week study trip to Europe, where participating students visit England, France, and Germany, in the fall of their second year of high school. This trip gives our high school students the opportunity to use the English they have learned, to communicate with people from around the world.

We encourage all our Friends Club graduates, who love English and want to acquire English skills that will be useful for studying abroad and entering universities in the future, to consider joining our MeySen High School program!

Mr. John (current Chairman of the Board) teaching in the inaugural year.



# Enjoying springtime events in the sunshine!



Friends Day



Special Day



Family Day



Waku-Waku Day

## MeySen Encyclopedia

**<Candy>**  
This genius dog learned 120 commands!

Dogs have been living with humans for a long time, and not only as pets, but also serving in other roles such as police dogs, guide dogs, disaster rescue dogs, and in many other useful ways.

The Takamori campus had an Old English Sheepdog named Candy, from 1989 to 2001. Candy was not only an excellent member of MeySen Academy, learning about 120 commands and faithfully following instructions, memorizing our school's bus schedule, and walking to the bus rotary to greet the buses as they arrived, but she was also a proud mother of 12 puppies, in her largest litter.

After Candy retired, she was succeeded by Cookie, then Taffy, and then Happy. Over the years, due to a lack of volunteers who could devote the time needed to care for this special breed of dog, Coco became the last MeySen dog.

