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Himeji Cultural and International Exchange Foundation
 – newsletter editing volunteers

Himeji Municipal High School will Change!

There are currently three municipal high schools in Himeji City: Himeji High School, Kotogaoka High School, and Shikama High School. In April 2026, these three high schools will start combining into one “Himeji Municipal High School”. The new high school will be credit-based. Students can choose the course of study they wish to pursue according to their interests and career path.

The current three high schools will be accepting students until April 2025. Students attending these schools will continue to attend their respective high schools until graduation. Students who will be attending “Himeji Municipal High School” will attend in the building of current Himeji High School. After that, there are plans to build a new school building in the Tegara district.

Schedule for reorganization of municipal high schools

	Year 2025	Year 2026	Year 2027	Year 2028
Himeji H.S.	3 rd grade	3 rd grade	3 rd grade	
Kotogaoka H.S.	2 nd grade	2 nd grade		
Shikama H.S.	1 st grade			
Himeji Municipal H.S.		1 st grade	1 st grade	1 st grade
			2 nd grade	2 nd grade
				3 rd grade

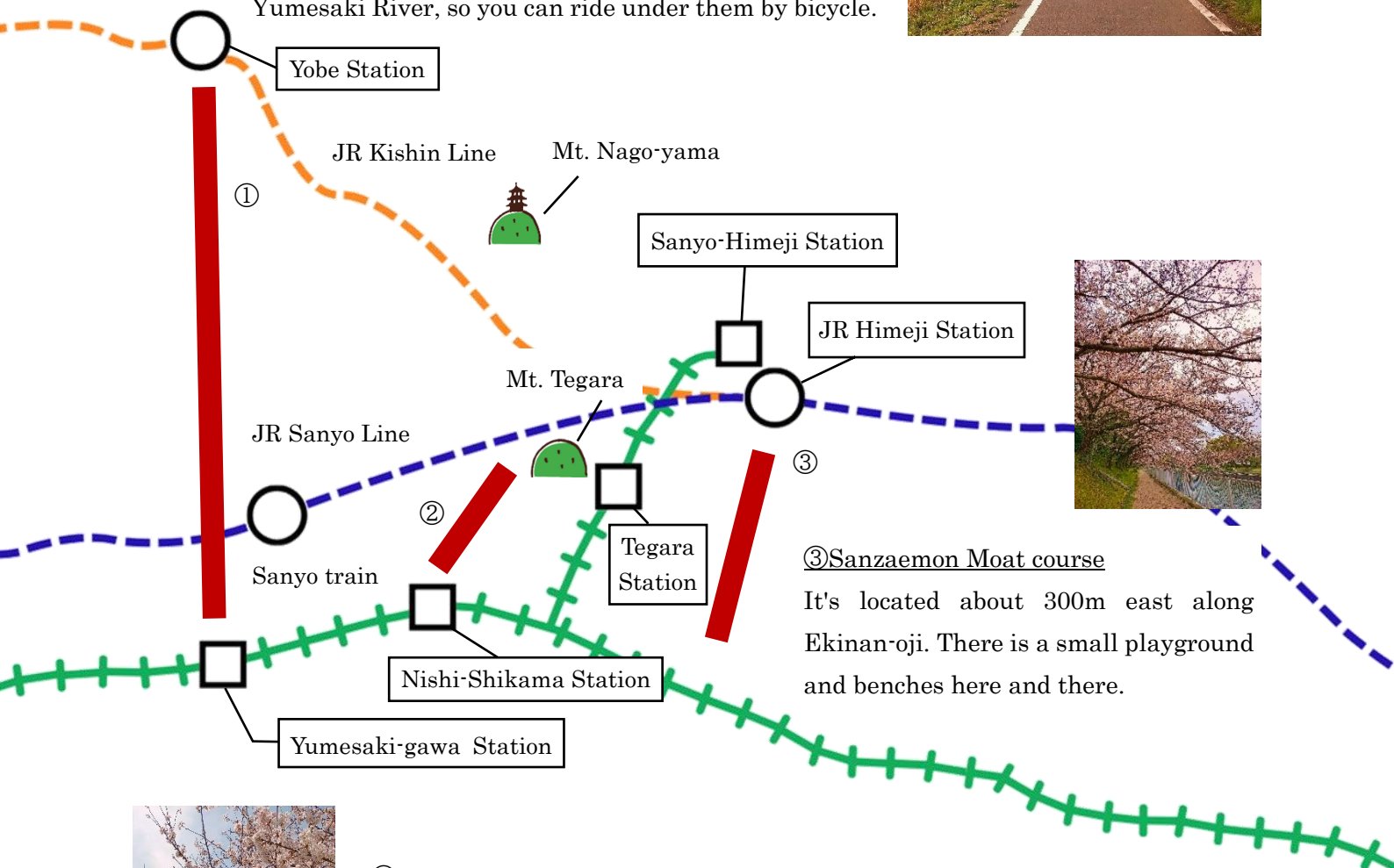
When the number of schools is reduced, you may have concerns such as, “Will it be harder for me to pass the exam?” or “Will it be too far to get to the school?” If you have any questions, please consult with your school, your child's teachers, or others around you.

How about Viewing the Cherry Blossoms by Bicycle?

Himeji city has cycling roads (roads for bicycles and pedestrians only) along rivers. Many of them have cherry trees planted on the sides. How about enjoying a special cherry blossom viewing while cycling?

①Yumesaki River course

It's the longest cycling road around Himeji and its total distance is approximately 5km. The riverbed is wide and there are many places where cherry trees are planted. There are cherry tree arches along the Yumesaki River, so you can ride under them by bicycle.



③Sanzaemon Moat course

It's located about 300m east along Ekinan-oji. There is a small playground and benches here and there.



②Mizuo River course

This route starts from the west side of Mt. Tegara. Tsuda Park, which is large and has a big playground, is our recommendation.

You may be able to discover some places and things here and there that you can't find while you are driving a car. Enjoy viewing the spring landscape by bicycle.

The Traffic Rules for Bicycles Have Changed

Although bicycles are convenient when you want to enjoy cycling or go to places that are a little far away, the number of traffic accidents caused by reckless bicycle riders has been increasing. Therefore, the laws regarding bicycles were revised on November 1st, 2024, and new penalties were implemented for dangerous bicycle riding. Let's prevent accidents by following the traffic rules.



1. Prohibition of smartphone use while riding a bicycle

Talking on a smartphone or having a similar device in your hand and looking at its screen while riding a bicycle are prohibited. If you want to check your smartphone, stop pedaling. For a violation, the penalty is up to six months of imprisonment or a fine of up to 100,000 yen.



In addition, if you cause an accident while riding a bicycle and looking at your smartphone, you will be punished with up to one year imprisonment or a fine of up to 300,000 yen.



2. Prohibition of drunk riding

Riding a bicycle under the influence of alcohol is prohibited. Even if some time has passed since drinking, it is considered a violation to ride a bicycle with alcohol remaining in your body. Keep in mind that the time required to metabolize alcohol varies from person to person.



Violations will result in a penalty of up to 3 years imprisonment or a fine of up to 500,000 yen.

※ A penalty is also imposed on the person who provided the bicycle or alcoholic beverages.

Other forms of “distracted bicycle riding” which may also be subject to penalties.

- Riding a bicycle while wearing earphones

This is dangerous because it prevents you from hearing the sounds and voices of others around you, which are necessary for safe bicycle riding.

- Riding a bicycle while holding an umbrella

Umbrellas can block the view or make it difficult to steer, which is dangerous. On rainy days, it is advisable to wear a raincoat instead.



The Sister Castles of Himeji

Himeji City has six sister cities and three sister castles, and has deep friendships with each of them.

Chantilly Castle (Chantilly, France)

Chantilly Castle became the first sister castle to Himeji Castle in 1989 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Himeji City's establishment. It was the first time for a Japanese castle to have formed a sister castle relationship with a castle in another country. Château de Chantilly was built in the 14th century and was used as a residence for the nobility for many years. It currently houses the Condé Museum and a library, which attract many visitors. At the Condé Museum, you can see the collections put together by the nobles who lived in the castle.



Conwy Castle (Conwy, Wales)

Conwy Castle became the second sister castle to Himeji Castle in October 2019 to commemorate the 130th anniversary of Himeji City's establishment. This castle was built in the 13th century by King Edward I of England. Conwy's old town, including Conwy Castle, has been designated a World Heritage Site. Both Himeji Castle and Conwy Castle are beloved as local symbols. It was the first time for a Welsh castle to have formed a sister castle relationship with another country.



Wawel Castle (Krakow, Poland)

Wawel Castle was the residence of the Polish kings. The historic center of Krakow, including Wawel Castle, was one of the first 12 World Heritage Sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1978. In this old town area, there are many historical buildings that survived the war without being destroyed, including Wawel Castle. Himeji Castle, Japan's first World Heritage Site, is also a castle that survived the war when most of the city was burned down. The two castles, which share historical similarities, became sister castles in 2024. This marks Himeji Castle's third sister castle relationship.



People -Interview-

Ms. IZUTSU Joanna (Poland)



She first came to Japan in 1993, got married the following year and has been living in Himeji ever since.

She was interviewed for VIVA!ひめじ Vol.16 in March 2006. She has been working as a consultant at the Foreign Nationals Advice Center since March 2024. As a volunteer at the Himeji International Exchange Festival, she has been selling Polish food at its very popular sales section: "Dishes of the world."

Q Has anything changed since 2006?

A A lot has changed. I've become very busy with my work, moving to a new house, taking care of my parents-in-law and supporting my daughter with the incurable disease. I myself also became sick due to exhaustion. To balance my mental health, I started working at a Japanese style café shop. For 3 years I enjoyed cooking which greatly helped me regain my health.

Since my father passed away in 2022, I have been traveling back to Poland every year, to support my mother who now lives alone. Now I continue to think positively despite the many differences between Japan and Poland.

Q Tell us about your job.

A I work every Thursday as an English consultant at the Himeji Foreign Nationals Advice Center, located on the first floor of Himeji City Hall. We provide consultations to foreigners facing various problems. We can also introduce them to the relevant departments or institutions.

Helping and advising foreigners is very rewarding job and using English at work gives me a lot of satisfaction.

Q In 2024, Wawel Castle became a sister castle for Himeji Castle. Have you ever visited it?

A I visited the castle when I was in junior high school, but I don't remember much about it.

When I visited Kraków in 2018, I saw the castle only from outside, while on a cruise ship. It's a very impressive castle perched on a hill, with Vistula River flowing at its base.



Q Please let us know your dreams and goals for the future.

A I dream of becoming a handmade creator, making original greeting cards and my own works using vintage items.

If possible, I would like to split my time between both Poland and Japan, living a few months each year.

Please Answer the Questionnaire

Thank you for always reading VIVA!ひめじ. In order to continue disseminating information that will be useful in the lives of our readers, we would love to hear your opinions.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated to make VIVA!ひめじ better.

How to answer the questionnaire

You can open the survey response form by Scanning the QR code below with your smartphone. Please answer the questions on the form. (Number of questions: 7, Required time: approximately 5 minutes)



Questions of the questionnaire

1. What language of VIVA!ひめじ do you read?
2. What is your nationality and mother tongue?
3. How do you receive VIVA!ひめじ?
4. How often do you read VIVA!ひめじ?
5. What was the most interesting or the best articles you have ever read?
6. What kind of topics would you like to read in VIVA!ひめじ in the future?
7. Feel free to write any messages or opinions.

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These names are used with the contributors' permission. Their assistance is much appreciated.

You can read previous issues of “VIVA! ひめじ” on the website of Himeji Cultural and International Exchange Foundation International Exchange Section. The next issue will be available in June, 2025.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. We are also looking for translators and native speakers to assist us with translating and proofreading upcoming editions. If you are interested, please contact us at the address on the right.



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