



Dominick and Akiko Okamoto recently relocated from Tokyo to Norwich with their sons Louis, nine, in Year 5 and Leo, seven in Year 3.

Dominick thinks Colman Junior School's **focus** on English as an additional language has been **excellent** in **supporting** his children's **integration** into UK education

Parental recommendation

Moving to the other side of the world is a big decision when you have children and choosing the right school involves lots of consideration. Living in Tokyo, Dominick and Akiko did much of their research using the internet and Ofsted reports. "Ofsted gave us a good benchmark, but we also used the Mumsnet parenting forum which directed us to Colman Junior School as somewhere that was progressing quickly under a new Headteacher," says Dominick.



English as an additional language

Japanese is the primary language for the Okamoto family so when Dominick contacted the school he was impressed to learn about their focus on English as an additional language (EAL).

When Dominick and Akiko first visited Colman Junior School, it appealed in many ways: "The EAL teacher greeted us with some Japanese she had learned specifically for meeting with us, which was nice. It was very much about welcoming us to the Colman family, which we liked", says Dominick. "The EAL teacher explained how she would help the boys to integrate and what kind of support we could expect Leo and Louis to receive. It was encouraging and just what we were looking for."

Warm and welcoming

As Dominick and Louis arrived in Norwich a little earlier than Akiko and Leo it was straight in at the deep end for Louis. Dominick says: "The teacher had taught the class how to say hello and how to count to ten in Japanese. Louis immediately felt welcome and impressed that people were making an effort.

"At the end of his second week he received a Headteachers' Award for settling in so well, which was a great thing for Louis. Teaching the children some Japanese really helped him and as a result he's made friends far sooner than expected."

Exceeding expectations

Dominick is impressed with the quick progress the boys have made with their English. "Prior to Colman Junior School, Louis would answer all my English questions in Japanese but now he's happy to try and answer in English," says Dominick. "His reading has come on a lot in the short time he's been working with the EAL teacher too. I'm astonished at how quickly his reading level has risen. He seems able to have a go at reading almost anything now!"

Extra thought

To help Leo settle, the Headteacher paired him with another child in his class whose mum is also Japanese. "Leo was apprehensive about starting school, but this was a thoughtful thing to do giving him someone he could immediately identify with," says Dominick.

Both boys were also given a set of picture cards to help them communicate with their teachers which was reassuring for Dominick and Akiko. "Louis suffers with migraines," explains Dominick. "The school developed an extra picture card for him so he could let the teacher know if he had a headache and needed his medication."

Integration into the Colman family

Dominick and Akiko have been impressed with the overall effort of staff and the excellent methods used to help the children interact in class. "The use of electronic tablets in the early days was also a great way to help the boys translate things," says Dominick. "We've joined the school when they've had lots of experience supporting children whose first language isn't English. The pastoral teacher who spends time on a one to one basis with the children is also a good source of support."

Dominick adds: "The teachers always make themselves available. We think Colman Junior School is very welcoming; we certainly feel they've done everything possible to help our boys settle quickly into the Colman family."

Children say:

Louis: "I've enjoyed making things as a way of learning."

Leo: "School dinners are really nice at Colman Junior School!"



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