

4th July 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

Komatsu 2020-2021 student exchange

Your child has applied to be involved with a new exchange programme between the city of Komatsu, Japan and Kingsmeadow School. This is an exciting development for our school and aims to maintain the exchange programme that was established 28 years ago between Gateshead Council and Komatsu City.

Whilst the cost of a trip to Japan is high, this should not cost you or your child anything other than a time commitment to a two year exchange programme, fundraising and being available for both the trip and the return visit of our Japanese friends in 2021. Any personal spending money would not be included in this. We aim to meet the cost of the exchange through grant applications, support from Gateshead Council, local businesses and fundraising. We are keen for the children involved to play a very active role in all of this.

Following a visit to Komatsu at May half-term by myself and Mrs Almeda-Urwin, there can be no doubt that this will be a life-changing experience and a wonderful opportunity for some of our pupils to develop a wide range of skills and attributes. To select these students we asked for a letter of application to be submitted and we have been delighted by the calibre of the responses received.

From these applications we have decided to select 25 students to go through to the next stage of the process which will mean they become involved in the fundraising and organisation of the exchange programme between September and November 2019. **We are delighted that your child's application has made it through to this stage of 25 and if you consent to their involvement they will start the next phase in September.** Students will be awarded points for their involvement in activities, ambassadorial roles, behaviour, attendance and a final interview.

We intend to then reduce the group to 8 final students who will go to Japan in the summer of 2020, this is likely to be the last week of term and the first week of the summer holidays but dates will be confirmed early in the next academic year. The decision on which students get to go on the exchange will be made in conjunction with the Headteacher and those staff involved in the exchange and will take into consideration any factors that we feel appropriate. That decision will be final. We will also select one male and one female reserve. Pupils will be expected to attend some Japanese language and cultural awareness lessons prior to the summer term that we will host at the school.

Those students who do not make it through to this stage will be invited to be involved with the return visit of the Japanese students the following summer.

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The exchange visit to Komatsu will involve many incredible cultural and academic experiences including visits to the Aeon Mall, Meeting the Mayor, the Science Hills, Ataka Shrine, Hoyo Moss Gardens, Natadera Temple, Rojo Park and the Komatsu factory. The children will also get to experience traditional Japanese food and drink at noodle, sushi and okonomiyaki restaurants as well as a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. We are looking into the possibility of a two day visit to Tokyo on our return from Komatsu to take in some of the Olympics but this is just at the enquiry stage at present. Finally, we will get the students to experience traditional Japanese painting and ceramics workshops as well as life at different Japanese schools. There will be a similar programme of events the following summer when the Japanese students come to Gateshead.

We expect the students to gain a lot from this visit but also that they share this with others and act as ambassadors for the school. It goes without saying that we need the highest standards of behaviour and conduct. We will start getting to know our Japanese exchange partners via both email communications and video calling in the next academic year, this should help to forge a close relationship which we encourage the students to continue into their futures. Please note that this is not a 'homestay' exchange and students will be staying in either hotel or dormitory accommodation on both parts of the programme. The journey to Komatsu takes roughly 24 hours and is likely to involve flights from Newcastle to Paris, Paris to Tokyo and then Tokyo to Komatsu. Students will need a valid passport to participate in the trip. They will be accompanied by myself and Mrs Almeda-Urwin.

What we are looking for from the students over the coming months is that they are committed to the programme for two years, show resilience, are willing to try new things, able to get along with others and have both great teamwork and fundraising skills. If a pupil leaves the school in the next two years or is unable to travel at the last minute for any reason then the reserve pupils will be asked if they wish to take up the place.

If you consent to your child becoming involved in this process please could you return the consent form attached by 16th July 2019. If you have any questions relating to this please, do not hesitate to contact me at the school.

Yours sincerely

P Roddy

Mr P Roddy
Teacher of MFL

KOMATSU 2021 STUDENT EXCHANGE

I give permission for my child _____ to become involved in the next stage of the Komatsu-Gateshead exchange partnership and understand that this does not guarantee them a place on the final trip.

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Parent/Carer)

