

THE BREEZE

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St. Michael's Association

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Letter from the Editor

Japan is a land of changes. Sudden, catastrophic events such as earthquakes, volcano eruptions and tsunamis has been ingrained deeply in the national psyche, and perhaps it is because of this that nobody flinches an eye when the changes are more gradual and measured. If somebody who visited Kobe 50 years ago visits Kobe now, I wonder whether the visitor will recognize the city as the same Kobe he/she visited half a century ago.

The street car network has been replaced by bus. A subway system has emerged, connecting the newly developed residential area in west and north Kobe with the city center. 2 man-made islands and an airport have emerged, and the area around Sannomiya station has completely transformed itself.

An institution familiar to many of us, Kobe YMCA was located on a site currently occupied by Kobe Tax Office and Ikuta Police, not too far away from St. Michael's. In 1972, it was relocated to the Kano-cho site, between Sannomiya and Shin Kobe stations. 42 years later, in 2014, it was relocated again, this time to a site not too far away from HAT Kobe.

The gradual change of Kobe can be contrasted with the constance that is Europe. Upon visiting my university over the summer, I find that so little has changed over time. King's College, Elphinstone Hall, New Kings, Taylor Building, Crombie and Johnston Hall, Meston Building are exactly as I remember them. But this is a university that has been ongoing since 1495, and changes are measured over centuries than years.



King's College, Aberdeen (Aug. 2014)

What about St. Michael's? This is an institution that has been a constant feature of the international community in Kobe since its inception in 1946, and survived the 1995 earthquake intact. The visitors from 50 years ago will have no trouble locating and recognizing this small part of Kobe, so in a way, emanates the quality of a European academic institution. Considering the backdrop of changes that Kobe and Japan has gone through during these years, it is nothing short of amazing that the school has been able to stand for so long. With your help, the school will be able to continue serving the international community of Kobe for many years to come.

In the run-up to the 70th anniversary, the school will be embarking on a major structural refurbishments to the building, so the school can continue to serve the international community of Kobe at its current site 30, 50, and 70 years from now. To go with the refurbishment work, the school board is in the final stages of planning a capital campaign. The *tokuzo* status announced in the last issue of *The Breeze* is part of this, and *The Breeze* will be looking forward to providing the readers with the details of the planned work and the capital campaign at the next issue of *The Breeze*.

Keyji Johnsen, *Editor*

What Do SMIS Staff Do All Day?

The answer is MANY, MANY THINGS! My name is Naoko Kimura, and after working here for the 7th year I am still amazed at the variety of jobs we juggle with every day! St. Michael's International School is a very special and diverse environment with primary children from all over the world and adults from all walks of life eager to learn English, so our roles and activities also naturally vary. The Office is probably one of the most 'bilingual' spaces in the entire school, too!

Our day-to-day services cater to current children, parents, new families considering our school, newly arrived and returning staff, Board & Council members, companies that provide us with various services, companies that provide donations, friendship schools and last but not least to the Head of School and other key staff.

Each of our office staff have their own job descriptions - Kazumi Koseko takes care of the financial book-keeping, tuition fees, salaries as well as maintaining the school building. Sachiko Namao handles the day-to-day management of the IS section such as the school bus, clubs, school lunch, sending letters home, management of Parent Teacher conference schedules and school outings. She is also in charge of ordering and distributing school supplies. Sayuri Terada handles all administrative matters and day-to-day management pertaining to the ELS section and ELS admissions. This includes book-keeping, communicating to staff and students and ordering teaching supplies. She also assists many of the administrative tasks for the IS section. I assist the Head of School, Gill Tyrer in administration, school communications and coordinating International School admissions, from initial enquiries to the first-day-of-school.

There is also the Medical Office where Nurse Setsuko Morimoto takes care of general and immediate medical needs of children, staff and families, but I am sure that will require a whole other article! She has regular little visitors to her Medical Office everyday. Last but not least, Mitchan has been part of the Office Staff since 1964 and takes care of the school environment so staff and students can be safe and happy. She is one of the oldest working members at the school and remembers everybody who was connected to St. Michael's, so if you ever come back to visit please make sure you see her!

Besides the above summary of our job descriptions we all share in the more general tasks of taking phone calls, attending to enquiries at the front desk and attending to immediate needs of the children and staff, making sure we know which adult is responsible for students safe commute to and from school.

Some days are more eventful than others - small things from children forgetting their lunch, or an adult not showing up at a designated place to pick up their child, to air conditioning breaking down on an especially hot day! Or slightly bigger things like the typhoon affecting the school. Some

things are seasonal, such as welcoming the school community to school events or getting ready for the Bazaar. Some days can be so busy it makes our heads spin but somehow we get through, thanks to the cool heads and warm hearts of this really great team. I am sure this school will continue to be diverse and our tasks will continue to be varied, but we sure hope we are meeting the needs of the school community.

Please make sure you pop in from time to time and keep us updated with what is happening in your lives!

Naoko Kimura

SMA (Alumni) London Gathering 2014



On Saturday 12th July, eight people gathered at The Tavistock Hotel in London with Julie Redpath, Hiromi (Bundy) (Kiyama) and myself returning from last year.

This was the fourth gathering since 2011, when more than 30 people came from different parts of England; also Paris and Belgium. It was such a joy to see people getting together to share memories of their St. Michael's days. Everyone had changed in some way or another but we had one thing in common—a passion for St. Michael's.

The highlight of this year's gathering was welcoming Rena Relan, who was at St. Michael's more than twenty years ago. She is now a professional model travelling around the world. A lot of names of former teachers and students came up and we had such an enjoyable time reminiscing about our old good days.

The St. Michael's alumni are an integral part of the history of the school, marking the 70th next year. The London gathering is one of the good opportunities for St. Michael's family to meet up to share our love and thoughts of St. Michael's so please come and join us next summer!

Tazu Makino

New Staff

Saying “sayonara” at the end of the school year is definitely one of the most difficult things to do, but when we look at it positively, it also means welcoming new staff! This year, we are fortunate to have 5 new staff that we have welcomed into our SMIS Family. Nick Green (Year 3) and Rachael de-Bourne (Year 1) joined us as Class Teachers, while Gloria Tang (Early Years) and Grainne Fahy (Year 3 and 4) joined us as Teaching Assistants. Jack Dutton joined us in the English Language Section. Here is what they have to say about themselves and about SMIS!

Avni Shah



New Staff, 2014-2015

Nick Green

My name's Nicholas (Nick) Green, and I'm the new teacher for Year 3. I'm originally from London in the UK. This is my sixth year of teaching, but my first International position - previously, I have worked in a wide variety of state schools across South London. Although this is my first time living here, I first visited Japan last summer. I came to watch a football match in Tokyo, and realised that I had to see more of this wonderful country! After travelling around Honshu for a few weeks, I absolutely fell in love with Japan and knew what I wanted to do with my career. SMIS seemed

absolutely perfect - a close-knit community school with a strong set of valued and a curriculum that I knew would fit in well with my previous experience. Kobe, too, seemed perfect as a place to live. I really like how it's busy and urban enough to feel familiar to a city-dweller like myself, but it also has wonderful scenery and mountains on its doorstep. It's not yet been two months since I arrived in Japan, but I'm already certain that moving here was one of the best choices I've ever made. I've really enjoyed life at SMIS so far - the children are aspirational and creative, the staff are supportive and skilled, and the school's wider community has been tremendously welcoming. Thanks to everyone here at SMIS, I've settled in quickly and am now really looking forward to the year ahead.

Rachael de-Bourne

I am delighted to be living in Kobe and working at St. Michael's International School. A native of the United Kingdom, I am now in my 9th year of teaching and have been working in an international school in Hong Kong for the past 3 years. My goal in life is to see the world and living in Hong Kong gave me ample opportunities to travel around Asia. Top of my list was Japan and having visited Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka, what can I say...I fell in love!

When the teaching position at St. Michael's came up I jumped at the chance to apply for a job to work in Kobe. I thought that living in the Kansai region would give me an authentic Japanese experience and ample opportunities to explore further the wonderful country that is Japan. It is now almost 2 months since I moved to Kobe and I feel fully settled in the city and at St. Michael's. Around the school are posters with the words 'St. Michael's in a friendly school.' This was the impression that I got from the minute I began the application process and having arrived at the school, it is without doubt a 'friendly school'. I have been welcomed by everybody within the school community and I feel supported and part of the team. It is an absolute pleasure to be here.

Gloria Tang

As of August this year, I am very pleased and fortunate to have joined the team at St. Michael's as a teaching assistant in Early Years. I am from Canada (specifically, from the city of Toronto), but my family is from Hong Kong.

This is my fourth year in Japan, but my first year in Kobe. The previous three years I was a part of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, and I lived and worked in a small town in Mie Prefecture. Having grown up as a city girl, those three years in the countryside were a welcome challenge. I learned a lot about my strengths and weaknesses, the meaning of resilience and perseverance, and the small kindnesses that can be shared among strangers. The elementary and junior high schools I

worked at were also constant sources of fun and culture-shocks; it is because of them that I began to see teaching as a possible career for myself. With this desire to broaden my skills, I moved to Kobe and SMIS.

I am very happy to be in a school as multicultural as St. Michael's -- it reminds me of my own childhood in Canada, and it was something I definitely missed while I was in the countryside. It fascinates me to watch young children navigate the challenges of being bilingual (or even trilingual). Though I'm still learning, I am thrilled to be a part of the team of teachers and assistants that will prepare the students to become global citizens in the future!

Gráinne Fahy

I am so pleased to be working at St Michael's International School. I joined the school in August of this year. And after only a few weeks I already feel right at home. I am from Ireland, a small rainy country on the west coast of Europe. My mother tongue is English but in Ireland we also have our own unique language, Irish. It is a form of gaelic, similar to Welsh and Scottish. My name is from the Irish language. When translated into English it means "love". I am from a big family and miss them dearly but I love being part of the dynamic and devoted international family here at SMIS.

I live to travel and my thirst for learning about new cultures and countries is unquenchable. I have visited 18 countries to date and have a long list of others I look forward to exploring in the future. I have been living outside of Ireland for 7 of the last 10 years. Before joining SMIS, I was working for 5 years as an assistant language teacher at a large senior high school deep in the Japanese countryside. I have countless wonderful warm memories from my time there helping students develop their communication skills and express themselves in English. It was an extremely rewarding experience. I really enjoyed hiking and exploring the inaka, but I am delighted to be living in a dynamic vibrant international city now. I visited Kobe many times and from the very first visit, 4 years ago, I knew I wanted to move here. And now that wish has come true! However that wish has been exceeded by the opportunity I have been given to work in an exceptionally positive and creative academic environment that has been diligently honed and perfected by all working at SMIS. All the staff and students have made me feel so welcome and I'm really looking forward to working with and developing strong bonds with the staff, alumni but most importantly with the children. I hope to follow the lead and learn from the educators here that dedicate themselves tirelessly to their students learning. I love working in education as it is so satisfying to help others, especially children, to question the world around them and challenge themselves to try new things while growing in confidence as they progress. I, myself, hope to never stop learning and this is a desire I wish to pass on to the children at St. Michael's International School.

Getting in touch with St. Michael's Association

If you find the need to get in touch with St. Michael's Association, the best way to do this is through this email address. You are also very welcome to leave a message at the School office.

alumni@smis-mail.org

SMA Diary (& Key Dates from the School Calendar) (2014-2015)

26 th Nov. 2014	18 th meeting of SMA
25 th Feb. 2015	19 th meeting of SMA
6 th Mar. 2015	Founder's Day Celebration
7 th Mar. 2015	SMA Annual General Meeting
25 th Mar. 2015	20 th meeting of SMA
25 th Apr. 2015	School Bazaar
27 th May 2015	21 st meeting of SMA

SMA meetings typically take place at 6:00pm on Wednesday evenings.

SMA Meetings are open to anyone who has been involved in St. Michael's in any way – International School students, English Language School students, or teachers. We publish *The Breeze*, organize alumni events, and generally keep in regular touch with past students and teachers of St. Michael's.

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