

SATSUMA STUDENTS DISPATCH PROJECT: Simultaneously promoting “Global Human Resources Training for Young People”, “Cultivation of a Love of Hometown”, and “International Exchange with the UK” using the great achievements of our predecessors as a springboard

Kagoshima Prefecture



Background to the Project

Global human resources training coming out of Kagoshima, the region that built the foundation for modern Japan

Kagoshima Prefecture is the home of Saigo Takamori and Okubo Toshimichi, statesmen who made great achievements in the establishment of the Meiji Restoration—the foundation of modern Japan. With 2018 marking the 150th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration, to strengthen initiatives such as relaying Kagoshima’s appeal to the world and training human resources who will become future leaders, Kagoshima Prefecture, tourism industry related enterprises, and economic organisations have joined together to establish the “Meiji Restoration 150th Anniversary Project Committee” and hold a diverse array of more than 500 events and promotions.

Of these, one project of particular note is the “Satsuma Students Dispatch Project”, through which high school students travel to the UK in a commemoration of the history of the 19 students who were dispatched to the UK in the final days of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

Project Aims

The project aims to nurture global human resources who will lead Kagoshima Prefecture in the future, as well as deepen exchange between Kagoshima and the UK.

Project Outline (FY2018 Program Details¹)

Over a ten-day period, high school students trace the footprints of the “Satsuma Students” in the UK and undertake exchange

with local young people, thereby vicariously experiencing the efforts and achievements of their predecessors.

1. Dispatch Destination: UK (Camden Borough in London, Manchester, etc.)
2. No. of Tour Participants: 19 (15 high school students and 4 chaperones)
3. Dispatch Period: 28th July (Sat) – 6th August (Mon), 2018
4. Programme Details
 - (1) Visits to University College London (UCL)² and other sites
 - (2) Local activities (following the footsteps of the Satsuma Students, courtesy calls to Camden Council Office and other related organisations, tours of cutting-edge fields led by the UK, exchange meetings with young British people, homestays, etc.)
 - (3) Follow-up after return to Japan (preparation of report, participation in projects related to the 150th Anniversary of the Meiji Restoration)
 - (4) Post-trip training (Debriefing meeting, etc.)

¹Participation in FY2019: 3 high school students; 1 chaperone

²A university with which Japan has deep historical ties. Because this university had no enrollment restrictions based on gender, religion, or race, many Japanese students studied there during the final days of the Tokugawa Shogunate through the Meiji Restoration.

Even today, records of the “Satsuma Students” remain in the school register and there is a monument to them on the university campus.



Visit to University College London



Features

1. **Simultaneously cultivating young people’s international sensibilities and love of their hometown while unraveling the history of their home prefecture**

High school students, who are the same age as the “Satsuma Students” at the time of their study abroad, trace the footsteps of their predecessors and participate in exchanges with young local people, thereby cultivating not only their international sensibilities but also their interest in and affection for their own hometown.

2. **Further deepening friendship between Kagoshima and the UK through rewarding partnerships with British counterparts.**

A rewarding programme was achieved through cooperation with Camden Borough in London, Manchester City, and University College London (UCL)—with which

Kagoshima has friendship agreements—as well as the staff of the UK Satsuma Domain (now the Zaiei Kagoshima Kenjinkai).



Courtesy call on the Mayor of Camden



At the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester

Results of the Project

- Enhancement of participants’ international sensibilities and the realisation of a deepening love for their home prefecture**

At the debriefing meeting following the group’s return to Japan, the high school students made comments such as “Having gained an understanding of the efforts and achievements of the Satsuma Students, I strongly felt that this time we should be the ones to encourage the development of friendship” and “I intend to work hard and become a person who is capable of playing an active role on the world stage”, indicating that the trip had provided the high school students

with an opportunity to consider their own future paths and boosted their motivation to devote themselves to their studies.

Issues and Responses

What form should exchange take during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project could not be carried out in FY2020. However, discussions are currently being held with local government agencies and other organisations in the UK regarding measures to enable the “Satsuma Students” exchange programs between Kagoshima and the UK to continue in future.

Future Developments

Kagoshima Prefecture is aiming to further deepen exchange with the UK in the future based on Kagoshima’s history.

In addition to the “Satsuma Students,” Kagoshima Prefecture has other historical overseas connections, such as the visit by the Mayor of Manchester to elementary schools in Minamitane Town (2019), a relationship that stems from the Ingi-chickens that were brought to Kagoshima by sailors on board the British ship the *Drumeltan*, which ran aground due to strong winds off Tanegashima Island.

In the future, Kagoshima intends to invigorate its exchange with the UK by promoting similar exchange programmes that are based on historical events.

Reference URLs

http://www.pref.kagoshima.jp/kohokocho/kouhoushi/kohosi/gurakago/h30/documents/68694_20181210094113-1.pdf

(Kagoshima Prefecture Newsletter *Gurafu Kagoshima* (November 2018 issue): available in Japanese only)

<https://www.pref.kagoshima.jp/reimeikan/iosetsu/theme/kinsei/paris/index.html>

(Kagoshima Prefecture Official Website “Students studying Abroad in Britain and the Paris Exposition” is available in Japanese with multilingual translation services provided)

<http://ssmuseum.jp/contents/en/>
(SATSUMA STUDENTS MUSEUM)

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Key Terms

◆Meiji Restoration

Facing external pressure from Western countries to open its doors to trade in the mid-1800s, the greatest issue for Japan was maintaining its independence as a nation. To achieve this, Japanese people sought to transform their country from a decentralised state under the Shogunate system, building a unified nation through centralisation. The Satsuma Domain played a central role in this movement, working together with the Choshu Domain to establish a new government centred on the emperor and overthrowing the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1868. This series of events is known collectively as the “Meiji Restoration”.

◆Satsuma Students

Strongly impacted by the Bombardment of Kagoshima (August 15–17, 1863), in 1865 the Satsuma Domain dispatched 19 envoys and students to the UK aboard the steamship *Australian* with the aim of adopting aspects of Western culture and modernising the domain. These students wrote back to Japan from countries throughout Europe detailing the results of their studies and information about the situations in different countries, providing suggestions for the direction in which the domain should proceed. On their return to Japan, the students became driving forces for the modernisation of Japan centred in fields such as diplomacy, business, and education.