



HOKKAIDO INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND



There are about 30 international schools in Japan, all of them located in the biggest cities. All that is, except for one. The little potato-farming district of Niseko and neighbouring Kutchan – total population less than 20,000 – is the only regional area in the country that has enough foreign residents to warrant having its own international school. And it's definitely the only one whose students get to ski Niseko's world-famous powder as part of its physical education curriculum!

Currently with just over 20 students and plenty more on the way, the Hokkaido International School Niseko (HIS Niseko) was founded in 2011 after the number of foreign families living here year-round reached a critical mass. Before the school was established, the main options available to families were to go to one of the local Japanese schools, or for whole families to leave Niseko.

Five years down the track, Niseko's growth has continued to increase exponentially. Local companies now have dozens or even hundreds of staff year-round, and more and

more multinational corporations are setting up operations here – Hilton, Park Hyatt, Ritz-Carlton being among the first few.

At the foundation of all these companies' success, is the success of HIS Niseko. A well-attended, high-quality school offering English language education allows these companies to retain international staff, and looking ahead will better equip them to attract the best candidates from around the world who need an English-language education for their children.

HIS Niseko is a branch of Hokkaido International School based in Sapporo, which was established in 1958 and is Hokkaido's only other international and English-language school. The private, secular, coeducational day/boarding school is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and is a member of the Japan Council of International Schools and the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools. ■

MEET THE HIS NISEKO TEACHERS



BARRY MERNIN
Principal

Mr Mernin is a Boston native with a master's degree in science and maths education who has also taught at the prestigious Hong Kong International School and Singapore American School. Mr Mernin values lifelong learning and obtained a leadership certificate from the Principal's Training Center for International Educators. Barry's goal is to make HIS Niseko one of Japan's leading international schools.



LOLA LAI
Early Years Teacher

Ms Lola grew up in Singapore and after qualifying as an early-years educator developed an interest in modern educational techniques. After teaching in the field for a few years she travelled extensively, all the while gaining knowledge and insight on education around the world. She is passionate about building children's self-esteem, inspiring creativity and fostering a sense of wonder.



MERIK SINCLAIR
Kindergarten - Grade 2 Teacher

Australian Mr Sinclair first graduated with Honours in Asian Studies at Adelaide University specialising in Japanese Language, before also studying in Japan at Kansai Gaikokugo University. After graduating he became an ESL teacher in Japan, and has taught at many schools across Sapporo throughout all year levels.



JOIN THE SUMMER SEASONAL SCHOOL!

HIS Niseko offers a four-week summer school programme for non-residents to experience life in rural Hokkaido in the green season. Students practise independent and creative thinking skills alongside outdoor physical education activities – including off-season ski training! For details email his.niseko@his.ac.jp.

HELP BUILD NISEKO'S INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

Quality independent education is expensive and many families living largely off the seasonal tourism industry in Niseko can't afford to send one, let alone two or more children to HIS Niseko. Therefore last year the HIS Niseko Financial Aid Program was established to which a number of local companies kindly donated a total of ¥4 million (US\$40,000). This directly subsidised the cost of education for students in need, and in turn the funding, viability and potential of the school

If you or your organisation is passionate about education and the future of Niseko, and would like to make a tax-free donation towards the development of this vital Niseko institution, please contact Barry Mernin: bmernin@his.ac.jp or +81 (0)136-55-5252.

