



# The Grapevines



STUDENT EDITION, JANUARY 2025

## Pop-up Shops, Instant Access



Photo by Nanako Otaki

The vending machine

Have you ever heard of a school that has a vending machine stocked with school essentials? At Shoei, a new shopping system was introduced this year.

### Vending Machine

On the corner of the hallway near the teachers' lounge, there is a vending machine filled with items necessary for getting through the school year. The machine is regularly restocked, ensuring that products are always

available. It contains mechanical pencils, erasers, sticky notes, pencil leads, glue sticks, whiteout, and so much more. Not only does this vending machine have stationary, but also other products such as sweat wipes for the blazing hot summers, heat packs for cold winters, socks, hair ties, and masks. Shoei's original tote bags are also sold in the machine, which are popular among students.

### Pop-up Shops

This new vending machine is not the only way to get our shopping done in Shoei. About twice a month, a company called *Yougengaisha-Ooshimakyoushaisha* visits our school to sell stationery, as well as other goods. You can find unique products only sold there, such as washi tape, colorful markers, and so much more! When we interviewed the shop owners, I could tell from their warm responses that the company is run with great care. Since our school is an all-girls school, they

explained how they select products that have a "girly" appeal and carefully estimate which items the students may like. They told us that there isn't only one main popular item. This month, hand creams were sold the most, as it is getting drier and colder. For their customer base, they said that junior high school students come here the most, and surprisingly, the teachers come to shop too.

### Past to the Future

This new shopping method began around September this school year, marking a significant change for Shoei students. In the past, students visited the store run by Mrs. Kikuchi, a beloved figure who had worked at our school for an impressive 65 years. However, after her recent retirement, this familiar store was no longer available. In response to this, the school introduced a new, innovative solution to meet the needs of students. The vending machine and pop-up store have quickly become unique, practical, and efficient alternatives.

Together, these new methods offer students convenience and flexibility, ensuring that we can still get what we need on campus while adapting to the changes brought about by Mrs. Kikuchi's retirement.



Photo by Alisa Natsume

The pop up store.

By Nanako Otaki and  
Alisa Natsume

## Grade Smarter, Not Harder

In Shoei, we have five big exams a year, and Shoei students study very hard to get good scores on them. The most anxious part of these exams is not when studying or taking the test, but when we get back the tests marked by the teachers.

With an AI scoring application installed in Shoei starting this year, we decided to research whether AI scoring or hand scoring is more beneficial to marking our tests.

The paid application which the teachers use to mark exams is "Saiten Navi". It allows teachers to see every student's answer to each question, which makes it easier for them to correct and find mistakes. All teachers have various opinions on this, but most

students say they would prefer the AI scoring which allows them to have their answer sheets returned faster. To gather information on the differences between hand scoring and AI scoring, we interviewed two teachers. On the hand scoring side, we interviewed Mrs. Yamaki who teaches Modern Japanese, and for the AI scoring side, we interviewed our very demure English teacher, Mr. Hashimoto. Both teachers were pleased to answer our questions about how they were spending their time grading our tests. Through the interviews, we discovered multiple advantages and disadvantages on each side. We found out that AI scoring is highly accurate and can grade many tests at once which saves more time than scoring by hand. It

reduces the time it takes to grade questions with only one answer such as Power Words Challenge, an English vocabulary test which we have four times a year, and multiple-choice questions.

However, it is not beneficial for subjects like Modern Japanese, where the answers are open-ended and subjective. Nonetheless, while AI scoring is thought to save time, Mr. Hashimoto said it takes him 2 hours to input the answers into the system. Overall, while AI scoring can make grading more efficient, it is not suitable for all subjects, especially those requiring more complex assessment.

Through these interviews, we gained a better understanding of what it's like for teachers before and during test week- a topic

many Shoei students have been curious about. Both AI and hand scoring have their strengths and weaknesses, but it's clear that grading tests requires a lot of time and teamwork from our teachers.



Photo by Nayumi Noguchi

Interviewing Mr. Hashimoto

By Ami Shibata and Mili Kato



Shoei's mascot "Kilton" Drawn by Nanako Otaki

SHOEI QUIZ: Which grade did Shoei graduate teachers find the most difficult ?

A. Jr.3 B. Sr.1 C. Sr.2 D. Jr.2

Answer on PG 3

Answer: A, C

Gourmet

# Beverage Bliss

The newest feature at Shoei which is a big improvement is the vending machines! Students from all grades, including teachers use these machines as a little treat to help them get through the school day or as a present for themselves for their hard work. The vending machines contain about 50 different drinks from water to coffee. Although this might seem like an extremely small improvement, it marks significant progress in enhancing the school's investments.

Before the pandemic, Shoei had a vending machine stocked with sandwiches, rice balls, and other food supplies. However, in 2020, Shoei banned the vending machines because of safety protocols and to keep the students from touching the same button. This continued until 2023 when the new vending machines were placed within the halls of Shoei, which offered a wide variety of drinks at the best temperature.

Our attention was drawn to how the drinks were chosen. We found that first, the school requests the menu of drinks to the vending machine companies, and then the companies decide the specific items based on those requests. The items are frequently switched with the change of seasons, such as grape soda in summer or hot lemon in winter. Sometimes, they analyze the profits made for each drink and use it as a reference to determine the next season's menu. Thanks to the consideration made for tasty drinks we enjoy, we can get over the harsh weather in summer and winter.

We've all been wondering about the most popular drinks in Shoei. The number one best-selling drink of all time is Lipton's Luxurious White, which is sweet milk tea using pure Hokkaido whipped cream. It has a soft and fluffy scent of tea essence, and its tender mouthfeel made by the combination of milk and tea heals

the students' tired bodies. Another popular drink among students is Mitsuya Cider, carbonated water which was installed into the vending machine as a standard item this year. Students enjoy them as a refreshing start to the day, or a tool to wake their sleepy eyes up. In the summertime, Aquarius becomes highly popular, as it restores the lost minerals and vitamins after being outside in the humid weather. It can be said that the students are very satisfied with the school's choice of drinks; everything we'd want to drink each season is there.



Photo by Naoko Okabe  
The school vending machine

Having explained the variety of drinks they provide; you may be wondering where all the money earned goes. For this case, we learned that Shoei only keeps one percent of the money made while 99 percent goes to the company selling the drinks. Then, what does our school do with that 1 percent? According to a school official, Shoei donates the money to charity. We believe that this action really shows how much Shoei is willing to help others. Shoei not only does charity work for the local people in Japan but also supports other countries that have poor education and food sources. Again, it is honorable for us Shoei students to know that our school is a source of help and contributing to rescue those around the world.

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*By Chiaki Fujimoto and  
Yuzuki Masuda*  
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# Affordable, Sustainable Soup at TapTap



The TapTap restaurant

Photo by Mayu Okaguchi

Residing amongst the bustling streets of Gotanda, TapTap is a unique restaurant that has gained recognition for its dedication to the Sustainable Development Goals. It offers a wide variety of soups, from corn-based soup to oden, all affordable at 500 yen. For those seeking a more filling meal, one can add a

serving of rice for 100 yen, turning your soup into a heartwarming and comfortable dish. The restaurant occasionally provides special soup depending on cultural events. For instance, on the 31st of December, the diner served *toshikoshi soba*, a traditional dish to enjoy the upcoming year.

TapTap's attentiveness to

sustainability is evident. The restaurant takes a strong stand against plastic, only serving diners with metal spoons and offering soup tumblers for takeout orders. Customers who bring their own soup tumblers can enjoy their meal at a discounted price. For those who don't have one, this shop provides a rental service, ensuring everyone can participate in eco-friendly practices. As stated on their website, TapTap's goal is to inspire customers to adopt these sustainable habits through dining with them. It's environmentally friendly initiatives prove how businesses and individuals can work together to drive meaningful, sustainable change.

This shop is open from 7:00 to 9:00 AM and from 11:30 AM to 3:00 PM on weekdays, serving as a go-to spot for breakfast or lunch. However, it's important to note that the shop is closed on

weekends and public holidays and may close earlier if the day's soup sells out. Locals and visitors alike praise this shop for its dedication to quality and creativity. The soups are not only delicious, but also thoughtfully prepared with a variety of ingredients and its seasonal limited-time menus, ensuring there is always something new for customers to enjoy.

TapTap offers a cozy atmosphere for diners who seek affordability and high-quality meals, making it a go-to destination for both locals and visitors. If you find yourself near Gotanda Station, take a moment to explore the area and check out this restaurant.

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*By Mayu Okaguchi and  
Riko Nishida*  
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SHOEI QUIZ: Which events were the most memorable for Shoei graduate teachers? (choose 2 answers)  
A. School festival (CLD)   B. Sports day (SFD)   C. Hiking trip   D. Overnight school trip

Answer on PG 1

Answer: B



# THE GUARDS

Every morning, the Shoei guards greet us at the main entrance. We see them every day, but do you know what they do during the day? We probably don't pay close attention to them, but they play an important role in ensuring our safety. To learn more about their work, we interviewed one of the guards who has been guarding Shoei the longest.

Before discussing the interview, we learned a surprising piece of information. The company that guards the main entrance and Gloria Hall, the auditorium, are different! This was something which we hadn't anticipated, so we were unsure of whom to interview. However, with the help of teachers and the advice from the people in the

office, we were able to interview Mr. U, who is guarding the main entrance.

Mr. U has been working at Shoei for about 21 years and has worked the longest of the guards. He comes to school 4 days a week between Monday and Saturday, and the days differ every week. However, his everyday schedule does not change. Although his work period is from 7:30 to 16:00, he comes to school at 7:00, since there are students who come very early to study or do their morning club activities. One thing that surprised us about his routine was that he only had 10 minutes to eat his lunch! We thought that this was a very difficult thing to do, since it takes us about 25 minutes to eat our lunch. In addition, to get through the hot summer and the

cold winter, he brings fans from home, and uses a heater provided by the school.

His main job is obviously to guard the school and not let suspicious people enter. When we interviewed him, we also asked whether there was any drama that happened in the past. As one of his answers, he told us a story of when a man asked every Shoei student who passed by if he could get a ticket for Co Learner's Day, the school festival. Since the Takanawa police station is near the school, he called the police to take him away. Thankfully, only

small dramas like this have happened in Shoei, and serious and dangerous incidents have never happened. This may be all thanks to the guards, including Mr. U, for securing the school year-round.

By Mio Kojima and Natsuki Ukai



Photo by Mio Kojima

The guardhouse at the main entrance

# Cafeteria Chronicles: The Daily Dish



Photo by Naoko Okabe

The kitchen staff cooking at the cafeteria

When students are freed from their classes, the school cafeteria emerges as a unique getaway spot, blending in with the charms of seasonal decorations and Shoei's beautiful natural garden. Students can enjoy ramen, deep-fried bread, floats and a light snack after school. Despite being located on the 4th floor, it offers a surprisingly cozy

atmosphere, brightening each students' day.

If you happen to forget your lunch or still feel just a little bit hungry, don't worry! Shoei sells bread, chicken, fries, rusks, anything a typical schoolgirl would enjoy for a reasonable price. There are various kinds of bread- from savory types such as hotdogs, to sweet types like melon bread or chocolate rolls.

Shoei's chicken has been loved by students for decades;

with new flavors emerging to accommodate the trends in our world today. Twenty years ago, there was only normal chicken flavor, which is still enjoyed today; however, yangnyeom chicken is the most popular amongst students today, following the trend in Korean Cuisine in Japan. All students can enjoy the takeout lunches or light meals sold on campus, but high school students and the faculty can enjoy special menus at the cafeteria. Ramen noodles are the most popular item, and students can be seen running to the cafeteria as soon as they are dismissed from school to purchase a meal ticket. It is a fierce battle you do not want to lose.

Astonishingly, the cafeteria leaves no food wasted. Students can purchase lunch from the day before to on the day, so the workers have to estimate how many ingredients they need or how many meals they should make; hence some ingredients may be left over. If it is uncooked, like vegetables, it gets

stored to be used for another dish. Unsold leftovers from the lunch period are resold at a cheaper price during breaks, or after school. Food that makes it until the end of the day is bought by the cafeteria staff for dinner. This way, it is ensured that all the food made at the cafeteria ends up in someone's stomach.

Although the usage of the cafeteria during lunch is limited to high school students and our esteemed teachers, faculty manager, Ms. Morita, says that in the near future, juniors may also be able to use it. Today, the cafeteria plays a crucial role in sustaining students with its sumptuous meals and will continue to fulfill such purpose. Whether you are looking to immerse yourself in nature or taste seasonal specialties, the kitchen is the student's second home.

By Naoko Okabe and  
Ririko Tanida



SHOEI QUIZ: What two clubs are called the "special clubs"?

A. Choir club & The Bible club B. Choir club & Handbell club C. Dance club & The Bible club D. Handbell club & The Bible club

Answer on PG 2

Answer:



Memories

# Shoei Outside Tokyo



↑ Gakusou Photo by Shoei



↑ Sansou Photo by Shoei

During the holidays, Shoei students can escape the bustling city Tokyo and engage with nature. Shoei has its own cottages, the Sansou and Gakusou, both located in Nagano. Known for their cool, comfortable summers and snowy winters, Shoei’s cottages are mainly used for training camps for club activities, ski camps, and

volunteer camps. Students in their freshman year also visit for orientation camp, offering students a chance to bond, get to know each other, and learn about Shoei. The traditions of camping schools started back in 1889, when Miss C.T. Alexander, an English teacher and female missionary, opened her second house in Karuizawa for Shoei students to stay and study. This was not only the beginning of camping school in Shoei, but also the first ever camping school in Japan. The Sansou and Gakusou are now an essential part of Shoei, providing students with lasting memories and new experiences for personal growth and connection.



Photo by Shoei  
Shoei students playing kendo

## Sansou

The Sansou, located on Yamada Farm, in Takayama village, is a mountain lodge style building, built in 1966 with the purpose of creating a connection between people and god. With a ski resort where you can see a panoramic view while skiing, a meadow with cows leisurely eating grass, and a fancy cafe with a warm and cozy atmosphere nearby, the Sansou is enjoyable throughout the whole year. Mr. and Mrs. Tomita, the elderly couple who take care of Shoei students at the Sansou, make delicious meals for us every day and ensure our safety, making our stay fun and memorable. They always welcome us with warm and bright smiles. They are loved by every single student who visits there. Staying at the Sansou, surrounded by nature, is a refreshing experience full of new discoveries, leaving everyone longing to visit again.

## Gakusou

The Gakusou, located in Yagasaki, Karuizawa, was built in 1981, approximately 15 years after the Sansou was constructed. Notable for its large gymnasium and all-weather tennis court, the Gakusou allows clubs such as tennis, kendo, volleyball, and many other clubs to hold training camps in the summer and spring. While students can enjoy nature and new experiences, we also get to meet Mr. and Ms. Noguchi, the caretakers of the Gakusou, and learn more about the cottage. When I visited the Gakusou, Mr. Noguchi taught us the names of the flowers planted in the little garden, the wild animals that visit him every day, and even shared stories about his past life. Visiting the Gakusou enables Shoei students to learn many new things that we cannot learn just by going to school.

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*By Nayumi Noguchi and Karin Yanai*  
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# Our Amazing Principal: Mr. Okami

Imagine this: you're 22 years old, far from home, and about to start university in a foreign country where you know no one, speak a second language, and have to navigate a completely new culture. Now imagine doing it all without a roadmap—no guarantees, just a deep belief in the possibilities ahead. This is exactly what our school principal did when, at the age of 22, he moved to Wyoming to pursue his university studies. At our school, we are accustomed to seeing our principal as a pillar of leadership, guiding students and staff with dedication and vision. However, behind his calm behavior and insightful decisions lies a story of remarkable achievement that

stretches across continents and embraces both academic excellence and personal passion. Wyoming offered him an environment where he could thrive academically while adapting to new cultures. Studying in the U.S. gave him the opportunity to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, exposing him to a wide range of ideas and perspectives that would later inform his leadership style. While navigating a new country and educational system, our principal's commitment to academic excellence remained unwavering. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree by taking full advantage of the opportunities available to him. In addition to his academic pursuits, our principal

has always had a love for skiing. With its snowy winters and expansive ski resorts, Wyoming offers the perfect environment for skiing. However, he turned his passion into a part-time job as a ski coach, connecting his passion to something beyond enjoying the sport. Now, as the principal of our school, he draws from this rich tapestry of experiences—his international education, his academic achievements, and his love of skiing—to lead with empathy, wisdom, and passion. His journey is a reminder to all of us that success is not defined by a single path but by the willingness to embrace new challenges, learn from different experiences, and follow our passions. Whether it's

pursuing an education abroad, earning a degree overseas, or dedicating time to coaching, his story teaches us that we all have the potential to achieve great things when we remain committed to our goals.

Photo by Shoei  
Mr. Okami Kiyooki



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*By Mei Okamoto and Hazuki Kaneko*  
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