

### **Report by Violet Cloutman, Dame Alice Owen's School**

Before I went to Japan I didn't know what I wanted to do in the future, or even whether I was going to continue Japanese for another year at school. I enjoyed Japanese lessons, but I struggled with the language and it was hard to see the point when I didn't ever get the chance to use it. Going to Japan showed me that although it may be challenging; being able to speak a foreign language is exciting and rewarding; and learning Japanese is well worth the work.

Whilst in Japan I struggled to understand a lot of what people were saying, but by listening all the time I found I could understand much more by the end of the programme. Being placed in a situation where I had to make myself understood in Japanese really improved my confidence in speaking the language; and speaking to other participants about their experiences of Japanese really inspired me.

More than the language benefits, I think that the most important thing I gained from the programme was an experience of Japanese culture, and the chance to travel to a new country independently and meet lots of new people – many of whom I will stay in touch with for a long time in the future. I think that being involved with this programme has broadened my horizons; and it has definitely encouraged me to pursue Japanese despite its difficulty; and despite there being few people in my country who speak the language. I now hope to take Asian studies at university, which amongst other things will involve a year abroad in Japan – something that seems much less daunting after participating in this programme.

At my school there are not many students of Japanese, and in fact I am the only student in my class to be continuing Japanese for my last year of school. After having been on this trip, I now want to use my experience to raise the profile of Japanese in my school, and to encourage more students to take the subject. I have already spoken to many of my friends about the trip, and they were all very impressed and jealous of me having the chance to visit such an interesting country! Hopefully if more people are aware of the opportunities like this that are available to them, more people will decide to learn Japanese in the future.

## **Report by Joe Stanley, Dartford Grammar School**

Now that the programme has ended, I am sure that it will contribute greatly to my future studies of the Japanese language.

I feel that the greatest result is my ability to understand the language when spoken, which has improved hugely. However, I have also improved in many other ways.

I am now extremely passionate about the language and constantly strive to learn more. On top of this, the entire experience of the Japanese culture was new to me and I can now use an improved range of vocabulary and knowledge of Japan when giving examples during my conversation classes.

The experience has also given me not only confidence, but also basic knowledge and awareness when talking to both Japanese young people and also those to whom we should show respect. For example, I am now aware of, and can recognise the use of Osaka dialogue among young people, as well as in *anime*. Also, whilst on the programme, I was advised to use very polite language to the teachers and, more importantly, my host family.

When I reported my experiences during the programme to my classmates, they were amazed by the variety in culture, technology and lifestyle in Japan. After presenting a summary of the programme to them formally, many now want to experience the same course, and some have decided to take Japanese further into university.