

Tsuriishi-jinja Shrine

The object of worship at Tsuriishi-jinja Shrine is a 14-meter-long stone balanced precariously on the side of a cedar-covered hill. Said to be inhabited by a deity of knowledge, this megalith seems poised to tumble from its gravity-defying perch but has stayed put throughout the ages, even withstanding the massive tremors of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Many students come here to wish for good exam results, in part because “fail” and “fall” can be expressed by the same Japanese word. Like this stone, they hope never to “fall” in their studies and exams.

Reflecting its proximity to the Kitakami River, Tsuriishi-jinja Shrine is decorated with reeds harvested from the riverbank throughout the year. The shrine offers school-related charms (*omamori*) as well as votive pictures (*ema*) on which worshippers write the hopes and dreams they seek divine assistance in realizing.