

Main Entryway

The front entrance to the Former Kaichi School Building was reserved for esteemed guests. Students and teachers entered through the door on the opposite end of the hallway that faces the inner schoolyard. In contrast to the white, unadorned walls of the hallway, the ceiling's central light fixture is decorated with carvings in a Western motif. Sketches of the design for this light fixture survive in the notebooks of Tateishi Seijū (1829–1894), the carpenter who designed the Former Kaichi School Building.

Emperor Meiji (1852–1912) and Modern Education

Emperor Meiji visited the Kaichi School during a tour of the country in 1880. While in Matsumoto, the emperor visited several sites that embodied Japan's progress toward modernization, including a telegraph station and a courthouse that had been built in the vicinity of Matsumoto Castle.

The Kaichi School may seem like an unusual place for an imperial visit, but the school's innovative educational practices caught the emperor's attention. In the 1870s, the Kaichi School was the only school in the prefecture to include English Language and Culture (*eigaku*) as one of its core subjects, and the Kaichi School continued to experiment with new educational programs long after the emperor's visit. In 1890, the school implemented a system that placed students by their individual abilities, and the students who needed the most help were assigned the best teachers. This system lasted only four years, as it was found to cause bullying, but the school continued to seek out ways to improve student learning.

New facilities were added to prepare for the emperor's visit. A classroom on the second floor was converted into a sitting room by closing it off with partitions and elevating the floor to reflect the high status of its occupant. At the time, formal reception halls commonly had different levels where guests would be seated according to their social positions. Furnishings were installed for the emperor's comfort, including chairs and a gold folding screen.

The room's floor is now covered with a woven-bamboo mat similar to the one in the second-floor lecture hall. Matsumoto gained a reputation for this type of bamboo weaving during the Edo period (1603–1867), but today there are few artisans capable of producing it.