FRIENDS

The FRIENDS programme aimed to improve English and Maths attainment by increasing resilience and reducing anxiety in primary school pupils. The programme consisted of 10 weekly sessions covering topics including emotional self-management and recognising anxiety. Sessions were 60-90 minutes long, and were delivered during the school day by external project officers. Students were also given homework activities.

subject  Cross curriculum

key stage  Key Stage 2

EEF Summary

The FRIENDS programme is a cognitive-behavioural approach that is widely used in schools and has been trialled in Australia, Sweden, the Netherlands and the US. This study follows a previous, smaller evaluation which explored the impact of FRIENDS on academic attainment in the UK. The EEF co-funded this evaluation with the Department for Education to assess whether the FRIENDS approach could improve attainment by reducing anxiety.

The study provides no evidence that FRIENDS improved Maths and English outcomes or reduced anxiety. Pupils eligible for free school meals experienced a small increase in self-rated anxiety and depression, although these results may have lower security than the overall findings because of the smaller number of pupils.

The EEF has no plans for a further trial of FRIENDS, but will continue to support projects which aim to raise attainment by improving skills such as emotional self-management.

Project Salus

Independent Evaluator
University of Manchester

Pupils  3284
Schools  81
Grant  £450,000

Themes
Character & essential skills

For more information, tools & supporting resources, please visit:
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/

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Research Results

### Impact - the size of the difference between FRIENDS pupils and other pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome/Group</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KS2 combined maths and reading</td>
<td>0 Months' Progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS2 combined maths and reading (FSM)</td>
<td>1 Months' Progress</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated worry</td>
<td>+0.05 (Effect size)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated worry (FSM)</td>
<td>+0.15 (Effect size)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Were the schools in the trial similar to my school?

- There were 79 schools in the trial, located within the Kent Local Authority.
- Before the trial, the average percentage of pupils in participating schools achieving expected levels at Key Stage 2 in both English and maths was 82%.
- 26% of the pupils in the trial schools were eligible for FSM.
- 9% of the pupils had English as a second language.

### Could I implement this in my school?

- The FRIENDS programme is available to buy from Friends Resilience.
- This trial tested an external delivery model, but schools can also buy teacher training in order to implement the programme themselves from organisations like Salus.
- Schools often struggled to fit the FRIENDS sessions into the school timetable, which led to variations in the amount of time dedicated to the programme.

### How much will it cost?

For an average single form entry school, the cost of delivering FRIENDS is £1,728 a year, or £64 per pupil per year.
Evaluation Conclusions

1. The project found no evidence that FRIENDS had a positive impact on children’s academic attainment, overall. This result has a high security rating.

2. Among pupils eligible for Free School Meals, those in the FRIENDS classes made 1 additional months’ progress on a combined maths and reading measure compared to children in other classes. These results may have lower security than the overall findings because of the smaller number of pupils.

3. The project found no evidence that FRIENDS has a positive impact on children’s health outcomes, overall. This result has a very high security rating. Pupils eligible for Free School Meals experienced a small increase in self-rated anxiety and depression, although these results may have lower security than the overall findings because of the smaller number of pupils.

4. Overall, time was found to be the biggest pressure in ensuring consistency and quality of delivery. Schools often struggled to fit the FRIENDS sessions, which varied in length, within the school timetable. This lead to a variability in the amount of time dedicated to FRIENDS.