Zippy’s Friends

Zippy’s Friends is an intervention designed to improve children’s coping skills. Teachers deliver sessions built around stories about a stick insect (Zippy) and his friends, who are young children. The stories involve issues children might encounter, such as: friendship, conflict, change, and difficult feelings. The children discuss the issues raised, and play games and do role-play activities about emotions and coping.

EEF Summary

Zippy’s Friends is widely used internationally and has been found to have a positive effect on social and emotional outcomes. The EEF funded this trial to see if these results could be replicated in English schools and to measure whether the programme could improve reading outcomes.

The evaluation measured the effect of Zippy’s Friends on reading attainment and emotional self-regulation, and found no evidence of impact. While the trial was large and well-designed, several factors reduce the security of the findings (security was low for emotional self-regulation and low to moderate for reading). For example, comparison schools increased their provision of social and emotional learning during the trial, even though they didn’t use Zippy’s Friends, so the programme was not actually tested against business as usual. This means that the results of this trial show that Zippy’s Friends had no additional benefit over the extra social and emotional learning provision in the comparison schools.

Positive academic outcomes from Social and Emotional Learning programmes may take longer to feed through than those from academic interventions. The EEF will therefore monitor the long term attainment outcomes for the schools that received Zippy’s Friends.
Research Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome/Group</th>
<th>Impact - the size of the difference between Zippy’s Friends pupils and other pupils</th>
<th>Security - how confident are we in this result?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>0 Months’ Progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional self-regulation</td>
<td>-0.02 (Effect size)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Were the schools in the trial similar to my school?

The evaluation involved 83 schools, from five local authorities across England, and 3,904 children.

The average proportion of Year 7 pupils eligible for free school meals was 16.5% in participating schools.

Could I implement this in my school?

This intervention is delivered by teachers, through 24 weekly 45-minute sessions.

Teachers attend a one-day training and three follow-up ‘twilight’ support sessions. They are given a teaching pack with resources and a script for all lessons.

Zippy’s Friends is available through Partnership for Children.

How much will it cost?

Zippy’s Friends costs approximately £10 per pupil per year over 3 years, based on an average class size of 27 pupils. This estimate does not include teacher time.

Teachers can train to deliver Zippy’s Friends through Partnership for Children Licensed Trainers.

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Evaluation Conclusions

1. The project found no evidence that Zippy’s Friends improved reading outcomes or emotional self-regulation for Year 2 pupils. These findings have low to moderate and low security, respectively.

2. There was no effect on reading attainment for pupils who had ever been eligible for free school meals. There was a small negative impact on emotional self-regulation for these pupils, but this result has lower security than the overall findings because of the smaller number of pupils.

3. Children receiving Zippy’s Friends made small improvements in teacher-reported self-regulated learning, compared to other pupils.

4. The programme was very well received by teachers: all survey respondents felt Zippy’s Friends had benefits for the children involved.

5. Evidence suggests that the impact of social and emotional learning programmes can take time to feed into academic outcomes. It is therefore recommended that academic outcomes are followed up at a later time point.