



Partnership for Children  
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## MISSION

To help children and young people, throughout the world, develop skills which will enhance their present and future emotional wellbeing.

## Zippy's Friends expands rapidly across Poland

**Z**ippy's Friends, the international programme that teaches social and coping skills to young children, has found a natural home in Poland.

From a small start two years ago, when just a few hundred children took part in the capital, Warsaw, the programme has now been adopted by kindergartens right across Poland. A total of 12,370 children have been enrolled since the programme started, with 7,851 taking part this year alone.

Partnership for Children's partner in Poland is CMPPP, an organisation attached to the Ministry of Education, which offers training programmes to trainers and teachers throughout the country. Poland already had a well-established network of training centres in every region, and CMPPP decided to make use of this network to expand Zippy's Friends. Experienced trainers disseminate courses and materials in each area, and provide follow-up and support to local kindergartens who choose to take part.

Ela Nerwinska, Director of CMPPP, said: 'Zippy's Friends in Poland, or Przyjaciele Zippiego, is a really fascinating story. It has sparked off great initiatives and creativeness in teachers. Now that Zippy teachers know more about their pupils, they listen to them more carefully and have better relations with children's parents. This programme is bringing closer and more friendly relations to Polish schools and kindergartens, and that is why it is so valuable.

'Lately in Poland, there have been lots of problems with aggressive behaviour in schools. Early training in social and coping skills is the proven way for preventing such



Polish children in their Zippy's Friends class

troubles. It can help children, teachers and parents to cooperate, to communicate better and to create peaceful schools.'

Caroline Egar, Programme Manager for Zippy's Friends at Partnership for Children, visited Poland recently to see some classes and attend a teachers' conference. Around 90 trainers and teachers attended the conference, and Caroline found it an inspiring experience.

*“This programme is bringing closer and more friendly relations to Polish schools”*

Director of CMPPP

'What struck me most was how creative the Polish teachers were,' she said. 'While we often find that teachers make their own model Zippys, and make up songs for the children to sing in the classes, the Polish teachers had been even more inventive. We saw presentations of fabulous displays, puppets, poems and songs, and even Zippy recipes in Zippy cookbooks! Perhaps, as teachers and children learnt how to express their feelings more openly, this encouraged them to be very imaginative.'



A class celebrates with a special cake

It has also been very rewarding to hear some parents' comments. One said: 'My daughter tells me a lot about Zippy's meetings. I heard that she used her newly-learned skills while quarrelling with her friend and they both reached a compromise.'

Another wrote: 'Our son Mateusz used not to show his emotions and didn't speak about them openly. Now he doesn't have any problems dealing with his emotions. Moreover, saying the magic word "sorry" was very difficult for him, but now nothing stops him apologising. For example he will say: "I know, mummy, that this morning I annoyed you and I am sorry about that".'



Teachers present their Zippy song to the conference

Kate Stepniak, who coordinates the Polish programme, said: 'I have lots of phone calls from parents who really want their children to be involved in the Zippy programme in kindergartens. They ask me what is the most effective way to convince head teachers to implement the programme.'

'According to teachers, the most remarkable result of running Zippy's Friends is a decrease in the number of conflict situations. Teachers also report changes in the way children cope with problems. Children can talk with each other, share their emotions and feelings, and feel free talking about different losses. On the basis of these results, I can surely say that the programme is worth realizing in every kindergarten in Poland.'

For more information (in Polish) about CMPPP and Przyjaciele Zippiego, visit <http://www.cmppp.edu.pl/zdrowie/zippi/>

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