



'Sounds-Write has transformed my confidence and knowledge in teaching phonics'

St Oswald's CE Aided Primary and Nursery School, Durham, UK

July, 2022

Donna Wilson-Smith, Deputy Head at St Oswald's, a small primary and nursery school in Durham, describes how Sounds-Write has provided staff with the skills and knowledge to be excellent teachers of phonics, reading and spelling.



School: **St Oswald's CE Aided Primary and Nursery School**

Location: **Durham, UK**

Pupils on roll: **140 plus Nursery**

Age range: **3 - 11**

Free school meals: **15%**

English as additional language: **27.2%**

SEN students: **16.3%**

Ofsted rating: **Good**

Why did you choose Sounds-Write?

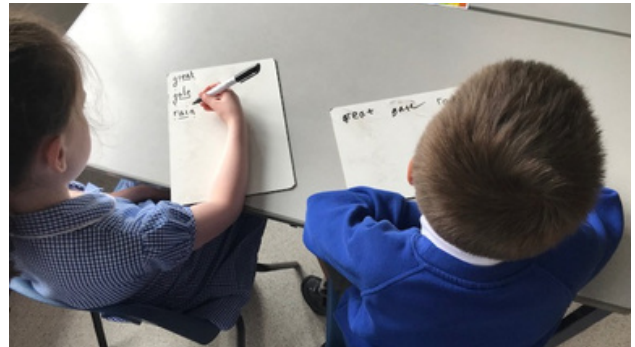
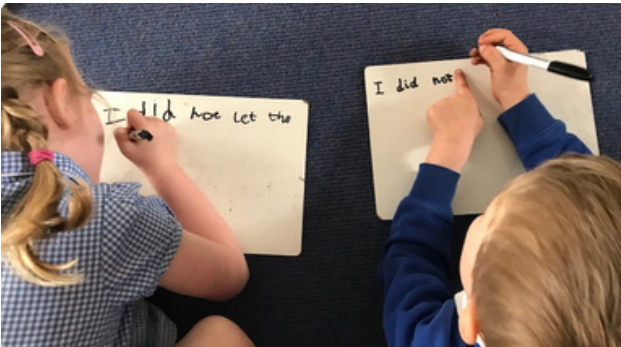
I heard John Walker speak at an event and immediately knew that Sounds-Write was exactly what we needed, because of the focus on writing and spelling as well as reading. We've always had good phonics and reading test scores, but spelling has long been an area for improvement.

When did you start implementing Sounds-Write and how did you do that?

I started using Sounds-Write as soon as I had finished the training. It was towards the end of the school year, but I could see that, for the children, any amount of Sounds-Write was better than none. For us, it was very important to have teachers and Higher Level Teaching Assistants trained in Sounds-Write to allow us flexibility, so when a new KS1 teacher joined, Sounds-Write was the first training course we had her attend! We implemented Sounds-Write in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 from September 2019. Unfortunately, Covid-19 somewhat hampered our plans to implement Sounds-Write in KS2, but we began training those teachers using the online courses during the lockdowns and have since continued to have our KS2 team access training both online and in person.

How did staff find the training and the programme provided by Sounds-Write?

The staff are enthusiastic about Sounds-Write! They like that it is solidly grounded in research and gives them the skills and knowledge to be excellent teachers of phonics, reading and spelling. They like that it's an easy-to-use phonics programme that does not rely on expensive or time-consuming resources. And it's ideal that it's designed for whole class teaching as well as being flexible enough to be used for individuals or small groups who require intervention. I have been a KS1 and Early Years teacher for many years and I have used many phonics schemes, but Sounds-Write has transformed my confidence and knowledge in teaching phonics in a way that no other training or programme ever did. It allows me to be a skilled teacher of phonics rather than a teacher who simply follows a phonics scheme.



What has been the reaction from children and parents to the adoption of Sounds-Write?

The children love Sounds-Write sessions! Our reception children quickly develop confidence as early readers and writers, and this continues throughout KS1. Our KS2 pupils really enjoy having a strategy to approach spelling polysyllabic words and they like to learn about the history of words. During the lockdowns, we realised right away that we could not leave our pupils' phonics learning to some websites and video clips, so we embarked on a mission to continue to deliver Sounds-Write as part of home learning. Parents were very positive about this and continue to be supportive of our use of Sounds-Write.

What would you say to other schools considering Sounds-Write?

Sounds-Write is not about expensive resources, and it does not rely on interactive whiteboards. Choosing Sounds-Write is not about choosing a phonics programme - it's about choosing to invest in training your teaching staff to be knowledgeable and skilled teachers of phonics. There is no replacement for solid, high-quality teaching.