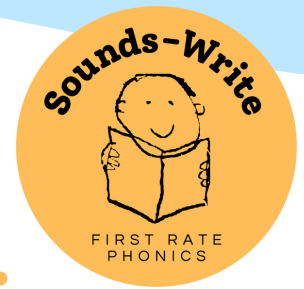


'All you need is a flipchart, a pen and a good teacher'

East Hunsbury Primary School, UK, January 2022



We spoke with Kathryn Pennington about the importance of using Sounds-Write with fidelity. She is Deputy Headteacher and Head of English at East Hunsbury Primary, a school with a 47-place specialist unit.



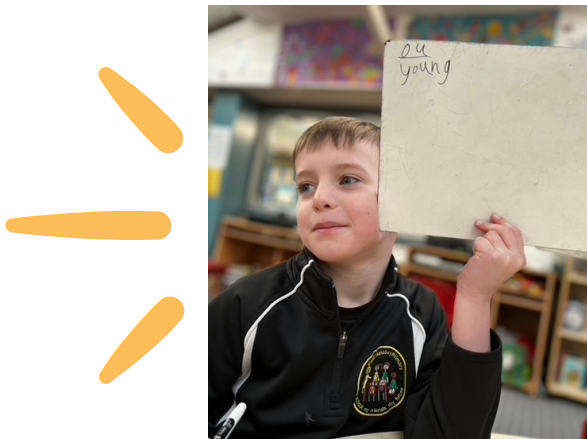
- 📍 School: **East Hunsbury Primary School**
- 📍 Location: **Northampton, UK**
- 📍 Pupils on roll: **427**
- 📍 Age range: **4 - 11**
- 📍 Free school meals: **12%**
- 📍 English as additional language: **27%**
- 📍 SEN Resource base pupils: **9%**

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

Sounds-Write was initially introduced back in 2007 and was used for several years after; however, inconsistencies began to creep in and it meant that we weren't doing it with fidelity. Alongside this, phonics wasn't always taught daily and the resources didn't match. We felt that our results should be higher, and it wasn't that Sounds-Write didn't work, but the way we were doing it was not what the programme intended. So, we decided to go back to basic Sounds-Write principles and start again. During the lockdown months, all staff in Reception and Year 1, and all the leads, got trained. I knew everybody needed that intensity, needed to hear it again. Our Phonics lead also took the Sounds-Write leadership course. We've also buddied with Selby Primary School and we're using observation as a way of learning. For the last two years, twice a year they'll zoom a lesson, which we watch, and then our Phonics lead follows through on what we've seen. She will be in every classroom and know how Sounds-Write is being taught across the school, whilst other leads oversee handwriting and Talk for Reading and Writing. My role as Head of English is to make sure everybody is at the top of their game. No one can do this on their own. Now that everybody is trained and we're going back to the scripts, it's about sticking with it, not letting up, with the confidence and security that it's not going to change.

What impact has Sounds-Write had on pupil progress?

We've just submitted our Phonics Screening Check results for Year 2 and we attained 93%. One child was absent at the time of the test (but did achieve the pass mark at the end of Year 1) and two children didn't achieve the pass mark; however, they still made above expected progress from their individual starting points and previous assessments. These results are for our mainstream children. We have to teach reading in a different way with some of our specialist unit children, because some of them cannot hear sounds or are non-verbal.



Phonics Screening Check results

2017 - 85%

2018 - 85%

2019 - 88%

2021 - 93%

(% of children achieving expected standard)

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

The children love their phonics. They like that it's the same thing every day, or incredibly similar, and that reduces cognitive load. We don't do sets; we believe every child can. For those who are going to find the learning more challenging, we do pre-teaching. We open our doors at 8:30 am and there's a trained Teaching Assistant who has been provided with the planning and delivers the pre-teaching, which is just a foot in the door of what they're going to do in the lesson. We also have a Phonics Club which runs Monday to Thursday after school for those children we have identified as beginning to fall behind. And children love that! We thought they would not want to stay behind, but they're specially invited and when they know it's Phonics Club, they love it. We have limited time to secure phonics with children, so some of the children will get phonics three times a day: pre-teach, the lesson and then Phonics Club to fill the gaps. What we don't want to do is pull them out of Phonics because then it's about catching up rather than keeping up.

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

Don't be lured into gimmicks and expensive resources. What you need to do is ensure that the teachers in front of the children are high-quality teachers of phonics. And I feel Sounds-Write does that: it gives us the linguistic background to teach phonics very well. I've seen other resource-intensive programmes and you really don't need that. All you need is a flipchart, a pen and a good teacher.