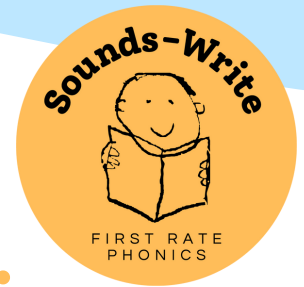
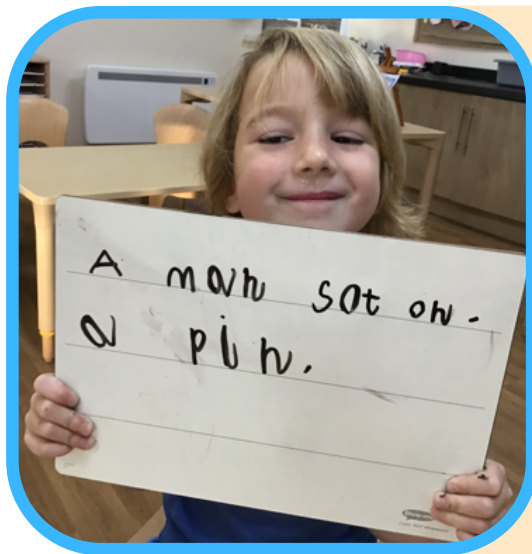


# 'The difference in the children's writing was amazing'

St Michael's C of E Primary School, UK, February 2022



We spoke with Beth Dawson, Head of School and English Hub Lead at St Michael's Church of England Primary School, a Department for Education English Hub in the North East of England. St Michael's has used Sounds-Write since 2013 and has seen great improvements in children's achievements in reading and spelling.



- School: **St Michael's C of E Primary School**
- Location: **Bishop Middleham, County Durham**
- Pupils on roll: **109**
- Age range: **3 - 11**
- Free school meals: **15.6%**
- English as additional language: **0.9%**
- Special Educational Needs: **20.2%**

## Why did you choose Sounds-Write and how did you implement it?

It was recommended by a colleague whose results had improved dramatically. It suited our school in that it was taught whole class and didn't need lots of staff for lots of groups. We liked the style of teaching because it gave the children constant daily practice and repetition of key skills. About 8 years ago we sent the Key Stage 1 and Early Years teachers to be trained, who came back raving about it. We tried it out in the summer term and the difference in the children's writing was amazing. The children quickly learnt what was expected of them and were able to focus fully on just the key piece of new learning within each lesson, but also recall and further embed previous learning, making the task of learning to read easy. After that we began training all our staff and rolling it out. Long term it was cost effective and suited our small school budget.

'Phonics is taught particularly well in the early years and across key stage 1. Teachers are skilled at helping the youngest children grasp the link between sounds and letters.'

(Ofsted, 2017)

## How did you find the training and support provided by Sounds-Write?

We found the initial training extremely thorough and by far more thorough than other phonics providers. There is also a wealth of supporting information and updates which are posted on the Sounds-Write website. Staff members have joined the Sounds-Write Facebook groups and find these a useful source of further guidance and support when needed.

## What impact has Sounds-Write had on pupil progress?

Our results have improved, and we often get 100% in the phonics test and are now a Department for Education English Hub as a result. The children in Early Years make fast progress with their writing and many attempt their own, purposeful writing in the very first weeks. The robust start and pace of learning in reception class sets our children up with a strong start in both reading and writing, which is then built upon throughout their education with us at St. Michael's.

### Phonics Screening Check (Year 1)

	St Michael's	National
2019	94%	82%
2018	93%	82%
2017	100%	81%
2016	100%	77%

## What has been the reaction from staff and parents to the adoption of the programme?

Staff are enthusiastic about Sounds-Write, and report that they like the program and the pace and the progression which is built in. Just as the children become accustomed to the lessons and their structure, the staff become very familiar with the script, and therefore the teaching of reading is very effective and enjoyable. We have held workshops for parents where they have joined in with a Sounds-Write lesson to help them further understand how their child is being taught to read and write and how best to support this at home. The feedback from these sessions has been good, and some parents, particularly those whose children have additional needs, have also accessed the free Sounds-Write course for parents.

## What would you say to other schools about the Sounds-Write programme?

We would advise other schools to seriously consider this approach. Come and watch us and see our children in action.

