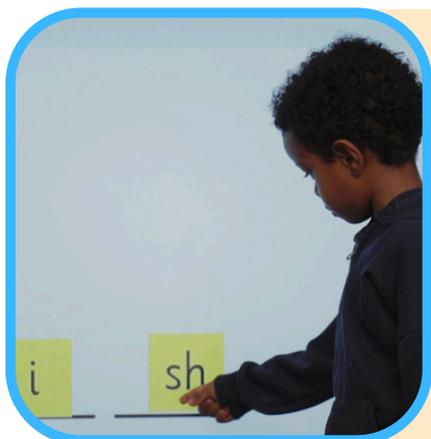


'No child leaves without being able to read'

St George's C of E Primary School, London, February 2026



At St George's Primary School in London, literacy is 'the heartbeat of the school'. For over a decade, Sounds-Write has been shaping teaching, leadership, outcomes and culture, explained Sarah Collymore, Headteacher, and Georgia Orchin, Deputy Headteacher.



- School: **St George's C of E Primary School**
- Location: **Battersea, London, UK**
- Pupils on roll: **234**
- Age range: **3-11**
- Pupil Premium: **66%**
- Special Educational Needs: **19%**
- English as an additional language: **46%**



The school's journey began in 2010. We'd heard about Sounds-Write and, after seeing it in action and sending the SENCo on training, we began using it with children with SEN. When we saw the results with those students, we decided that we would roll it out to the whole school.

From the outset, what stood out was the clarity and simplicity of the programme. Despite the depth of training required, the delivery felt stripped back and purposeful. The repetition and predictability of the lessons works really well for pupils whose lives may feel unstable. That simplicity is what sets Sounds-Write apart from other programmes. With no characters, rhymes or heavily resourced materials, Sounds-Write doesn't feel childish, so we can use it up to Year 6. At St George's, phonics is a foundational skill taught across the whole school.

'Some schools see phonics as a Year 1 thing, rather than a route to children being able to read for the rest of their life.'

We trained the whole team, teachers and teaching assistants, and implemented Sounds-Write across the whole school. We knew it wasn't a quick fix and we trialled it rigorously for a year, invited experts to leadership meetings and asked lots of questions, so we felt really confident that this was the right approach for the school. Leadership commitment to Sounds-Write has not wavered. There is complete transparency with new staff during the recruitment process about the need to complete the Sounds-Write training, and leaders will cover classes until that's been done, to protect fidelity.

Training is an investment in professional development and for new teachers, it is transformative. It's the best training they're ever going to get, and the approach can be applied beyond phonics into wider pedagogy. For example, the way errors are corrected in Sounds-Write is a good model for fostering independence in every subject.

Walk into a phonics lesson at St George's and the energy is palpable, with all children participating in the lessons and writing on their whiteboards. The children are excited, they're engaged, there's an autonomy over their learning and they feel part of it. We often see the children in Reception playing the lessons amongst themselves, quite successfully!

For older pupils, word analysis builds confidence and cultural capital, and looking at the Latin and Greek roots of words makes them feel really smart. The programme has shaped the school's broader curriculum too, and we've introduced Latin as our language, building on the etymological work embedded in Sounds-Write. We wouldn't have chosen Latin if we weren't doing Sounds-Write.

Parents are brought into the process, and we spend a lot of family learning time showing the parents how Sounds-Write works. Volunteers receive guidance too to ensure consistency, because this only works when we all teach it with fidelity.



Reading outcomes at Key Stage 2 are consistently above national average. For a school serving a community with high levels of deprivation, where half of our pupils have English as an additional language and 85% come from an ethnic minority, these results have far-reaching consequences.

Spelling results in Year 6 are incredible! We test spelling at the start and end of every year and in 2025 all our pupils left with a spelling age that was higher than their chronological age. Even our weakest readers achieved spelling ages significantly above expectation.

‘National achievement gap figures tell us that children ‘like ours’ do less well, but we know our children can, and our results prove it.’

Sounds-Write is not for those seeking quick fixes; it takes commitment, investing in people and teaching with fidelity and consistency. But the long-term impact is worth it.

At St George's, we make no apology for prioritising literacy and numeracy because you can't be a historian if you can't read. We believe that literacy is life-changing – if you're literate, you can do anything else. That's why our philosophy is simple and uncompromising: No child leaves St George's without being able to read.



Awarded for exemplary teaching and leadership of phonics