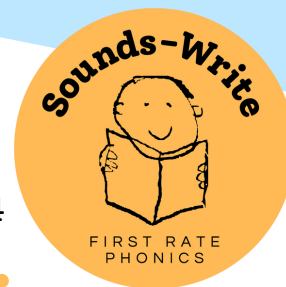
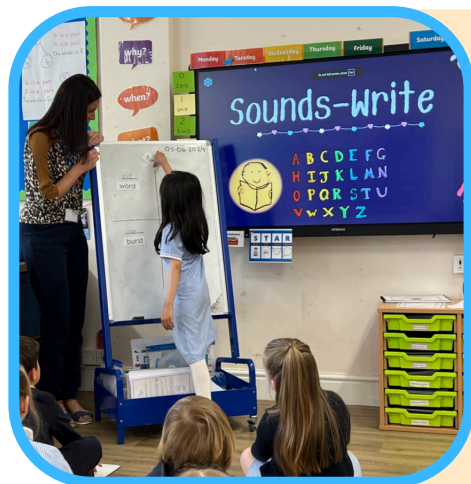


'The most impactful investment in my time at the school'

Twynrodyn Community School, Merthyr Tydfil, UK, October 2024



We talked to Katherine Murphy, phonics lead at Twynrodyn Community School, in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, a school that took the decision to teach systematic synthetic phonics to improve reading outcomes for their students



- School: **Twynrodyn Community School**
- Location: **Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, UK**
- Pupils on roll: **315**
- Age range: **3-11**
- Free school meals: **18.9%**
- Special Educational Needs: **15.8%**
- English as an additional language: **4.3%**

Why did you choose Sounds-Write?

Reading outcomes in the school were not where we wanted them to be. We looked at the research available and identified systematic synthetic phonics as the best way to teach early reading. We explored different validated programmes and arranged a meeting with a member of the Sounds-Write team. The professional development and links to meaningful research that underpinned the programme, along with opportunities to speak with other schools already on the journey, made it clear that Sounds-Write was the best route for us.

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

All staff (teachers, teaching assistants and the senior leadership team) were trained during the summer term 2021 and we began implementing the programme in September 2021 to children in Reception to Year 4, with a focus on fidelity to the script. Learning walks, lesson observations and coaching sessions were used to ensure fidelity to the script. We're currently training Key Stage Two staff, ready to implement in KS2 from September 2024.

What has been the reaction from children and parents?

Children enjoy the Sounds-Write sessions and are engaged throughout. This is evidenced by children role-playing Sounds-Write during enhanced provision. Parents have supported the implementation of Sounds-Write by attending parent workshops and reading decodable readers with children at home. Many have noted that their younger children, who have been taught Sounds-Write, are more confident readers than their older siblings.



What impact has Sounds-Write had on student progress?

The introduction of Sounds-Write is the change that has had the biggest impact on children's learning. Children's confidence and independence while reading and writing has grown dramatically.

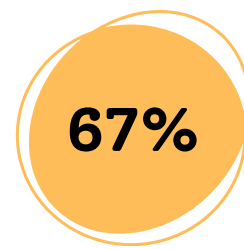
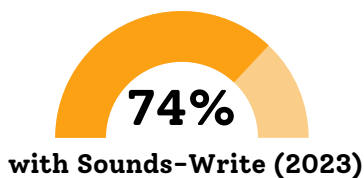
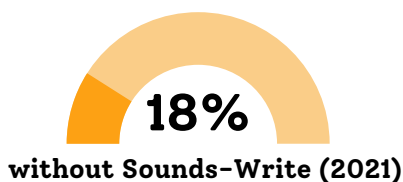
In 2023, 89% of children were at or above average in the National Reading Tests. 67% of pupils had a spelling age at or above their chronological age. On average, pupils were 13 months ahead of their chronological age and made an average of 15 months progress between the Autumn and Summer terms.

We also use the Phonics Screening Check to monitor progress with Year 1. In 2021, before we started using Sounds-Write, only 18% of our Year 1 achieved the pass mark. By 2023, 74% of our Year 1 achieved the pass mark.

Phonics Screening Check Year 1 (% pass)



of Year 2 - Year 6 pupils
at or above average in the
National Reading Tests



of Year 1 - Year 6 pupils with
spelling ages **at or above**
their chronological age

'Our outcomes are much stronger than they were. It has been really effective in ensuring that all our children maintain pace with their peers.'

(Alec Mills, Headteacher)

How does Sounds-Write compare to your previous phonics provision?

Sounds-Write has led to a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics at Twynirodyn through the use of scripts and the repetitive nature of the lessons, which lowers the cognitive load for teachers and pupils. Along with the lesson scripts, Sounds-Write provides error correction scripts to follow, and these foster children's independence as they provide just enough information so they can correct the mistakes themselves.

The biggest difference from previous programmes is that Sounds-Write begins with sounds in the language and moves from sounds to the written word. Previous programmes have focused on spellings rather than the phonemic nature of the alphabet code.

Teaching Sounds-Write sessions as a whole class rather than the ability groupings we used in previous programmes ensures we are closing the gap rather than widening it.

And the quality of training is fantastic. It has transformed our professional discussions and practice of teaching reading and spelling to our children.

