

'It's worked better than anything previously'

Toner Avenue School, South Tyneside, December 2025



Toner Avenue School has achieved Silver School accreditation for their commitment to delivering high-quality phonics. Sophie Cox, Phonics Lead, tells us why they chose Sounds-Write and why it works so well for them.



- School: **Toner Avenue School**
- Location: **Hebburn, South Tyneside, UK**
- Pupils on roll: **507**
- Age range: **3-11**
- Pupil Premium: **34%**
- Special Educational Needs: **18%**
- English as an additional language: **6%**



Why did you choose Sounds-Write?

We chose Sounds-Write because we liked the structure and how it was linked to research about cognition and working memory. It also worked well with our school ethos – all children must be part of the class and learning with their friends.

How did you implement Sounds-Write?

We implemented Sounds-Write in EYFS and KS1 immediately after the training. It is going really well; we've had numerous Ofsted visits and fidelity to Sounds-Write and matching decodable texts to students learning is always a strength. The consistency is very helpful if staff change year groups – the scripts and thorough training mean they're equipped to do this. Sounds-Write is always updating resources and their Portal/membership website, which is so useful.

How have teachers and other staff found it?

Initially, staff were cautious and were worried that it didn't have the 'bells and whistles' in comparison to other phonics schemes. However, when our Reception team had the majority of children writing dictated sentences in September, which had never happened with other schemes, they realised the impact of Sounds-Write and since then everyone has been fully on board.

How about children and parents?

Children enjoy their phonics lessons; the predictability reduces cognitive load so they can really focus on the sounds. We have 'mini Sounds-Write teachers' in Reception – they've memorised the script and, with their own little whiteboard, are often found 'teaching' Sounds-Write and telling the others to 'say the sounds and read the word', marking their lines on for each sound too!



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Parents love the parent course. We invite them into school as soon as Reception starts to teach them how to say the sounds correctly, and these sessions are always well attended. Later, we get them to join a phonics lesson to see how we learn in school, so they can continue to support at home. The feedback is always positive, and they wished they had learned to read this way!

What impact has it had on student learning and results?

All children make progress, but our results fluctuate and depend very much on cohort. We have some year groups that have 70 children, some that have 35. There is a refugee centre nearby, so we have children who come to our school for anything from a few weeks to a few months and then leave. And we also have above average number of children with significant SEND, some of whom can't access the tests.

What are the differences with other phonics schemes you've used previously?

The CPD is excellent and the fact it continues to be updated and offers so many additional courses is fantastic. The Portal and scripts make it so easy to teach, with less workload for staff. There's a huge amount of ready-made resources to support children, particularly on the membership platform.

We like that children are not removed from the group if they don't know all their sounds, which can feel like being 'penalised'. They still take part in the class with their peers, using little tweaks to scaffold their learning. Then they can be supported with interventions outside of class to plug gaps.

'If they're not in the class to learn the new sounds, how will they ever catch up?'

Sounds-Write teaching is straight forward and the focus is the sound, not rhymes, not actions. In the past, some children were saying those rhymes instead of sounding out words! The gestures are excellent for supporting readers to blend, and the purposeful use of continuants is such a useful thing to support blending. The fact Sounds-Write teaches polysyllabic words is extra useful as that is a stumbling block for many schemes.

'Teaching sounds within words just works. I have no idea why we taught sounds in isolation with previous schemes... why would anyone do that?'

Any advice for those who are considering Sounds-Write?

Visit a school and see it in practice, as that really helped with our decision making. Once you're committed to Sounds-Write, get on the portal and utilise the wealth of resources, videos and webinars, and join the Facebook group too, as it is so handy to chat with other practitioners.



Awarded for commitment to high-quality phonics practice