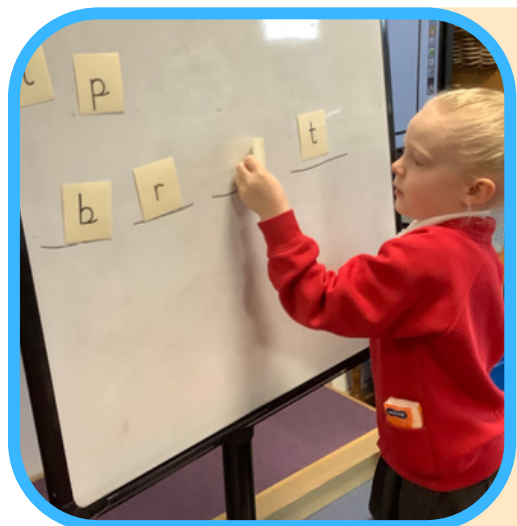


# 'Even the youngest children could write dictated sentences with confidence'

Milecastle Primary School, UK, March 2023



We spoke to Rachel Walton, Reception Teacher at Milecastle Primary School, about the adoption of Sounds-Write at this school in the north of England.



- 🐡 School: **Milecastle Primary School**
- 🐡 Location: **Newcastle upon Tyne, UK**
- 🐡 Pupils on roll: **201**
- 🐡 Age range: **4-11**
- 🐡 Free school meals: **26%**
- 🐡 English as a second language: **2%**
- 🐡 Special Educational Needs: **14%**

## Why did you choose Sounds-Write?

We were unhappy with the progress some children were making with the phonics programme we had been using. Teaching across the school was inconsistent and, in the Early Years, some children were not learning to read quickly enough because of a focus on teaching individual sounds. We also found that many were struggling with spelling. After contacting the English Hub, I visited another primary school and saw Sounds-Write in action. I was blown away by what I saw! Even the youngest children could blend, segment, manipulate sounds and write dictated sentences with confidence.

## How have you implemented Sounds-Write?

We trained all our Early Years and Key Stage One staff but, due to the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, we were not able to begin our Sounds-Write journey in the way we had hoped. We've since trained all our Key Stage 2 staff, and Sounds-Write is now well-embedded, with phonics being taught daily in KS1 and interventions taking place where needed. In KS2, our staff use Sounds-Write to teach the spelling of polysyllabic words and interventions are put in place to support children who require additional support.

'When you get that level of buy-in from your staff, you know you are on to a winner.' (Suzanne Richardson, Headteacher)

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

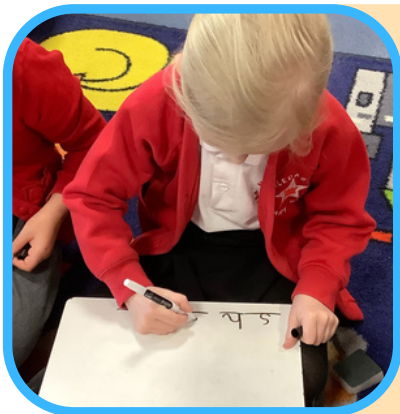
We loved the fact that the Sounds-Write training was based on so much research and everything we heard just made so much sense. We were already interested in cognitive load theory and the Sounds-Write training really brought this to the fore and impacted on our practice in other areas of the curriculum. The support from our Sounds-Write trainer was exceptional – she was there at every step of the way and provided excellent, constructive feedback and encouragement.

### **How do teachers feel about the programme?**

Once they learnt the scripts, teachers found the programme easy to follow, and they appreciate that the same techniques are taught consistently within all year groups. They also find the error corrections particularly useful, especially when there are many ways to spell a particular sound. These strategies, which are unique to Sounds-Write, allow the children to be much more proactive and independent in their spelling.

### **How have children and parents reacted to Sounds-Write?**

Our children love their Sounds-Write lessons and some even cheer when they know it is Sounds-Write time! The fact that lessons are scripted means that the children know what to expect and can really focus on their learning of the core skills and concepts. Parents with older children who were not taught using Sounds-Write have commented on the rapid progress they have seen in their younger children.



'It really is a simple and well thought out way to teach the children how to read. He amazes me every week with what he has learnt.' (Parent)

### **What impact has Sounds-Write had on student progress?**

We have seen significant changes to the speed at which our children learn to read and write. Within the first few weeks of starting Reception, our children can confidently decode and encode CVC and VC words and before we know it, the children are reading and writing sentences. This has done wonders for the children's confidence. In KS1 they continue to develop these skills and quickly become fluent readers and confident writers who are willing to 'have a go'. The strategies the children are taught mean that they can read and attempt to spell any word that they come across.

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

I would strongly recommend anyone looking for a high-quality phonics programme to visit a Sounds-Write school and watch it in action. You cannot fail to be impressed!

