

# 8 Princecroft Primary School, Warminster, England

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## 1. Context

Princecroft Primary School is a state primary school located in the rural, historic market town of Warminster in the county of Wiltshire, England. The school is one form entry and teaches children aged four to eleven across seven classes. We currently have 175 children on roll with 40% Free School Meals\*<sup>2</sup> (FSM), 14% Special Educational Needs (SEN), 5% English as an Additional Language (EAL). Languages spoken are Polish, Chinese Mandarin, Bulgarian, Somali, and Bengali. The local deprivation factor\* is -0.214.

## 2. Implementation

Prior to the implementation of Sounds-Write at the end of 2016, children in Year 1 were not consistently achieving national standards in reading shown by the Phonics Screening Check\* (PSC) scores. Due to such low levels of decoding and continually achieving below national averages, we decided as a school that we needed a consistent approach that could help support our children better with their phonics.

Sounds-Write was first introduced into Princecroft in June 2016. To begin with, only the Reception and Year 1 teachers were trained. Over the following year, all staff at the school received training. This included all teachers, teaching

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2. An explanation for terms followed by an asterisk can be found in the glossary: <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.55.1367>

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assistants, and office staff. Since its implementation, new staff have been trained to ensure that consistency and maximum impact can be had from those that support children in their reading. All staff have been trained face-to-face and some staff completed the Sounds-Write Revisited course online during lockdown in 2021.

Sounds-Write is taught daily throughout the school. The Initial Code\* is taught in Reception. In Year 1 and Year 2, the Extended Code\* is taught. Throughout Lower Key Stage\* 2 (LKS2), the Extended Code is built upon through learning more complex polysyllabic words alongside National Curriculum\* expectations for spelling. In Upper Key Stage 2 (UKS2), phonics teaching is enhanced through the teaching of etymology and morphology, with children analysing the spellings of words. All Sounds-Write lessons are taught to the whole class so that every child has the opportunity to develop their reading and spelling. Interventions are then taught in addition to this with children receiving the Sounds-Write approach in smaller groups to ensure accelerated progress. Where necessary, one-to-one teaching is used to support individual needs.

As a school, we have endeavoured to ensure that the Sounds-Write approach is taught with fidelity. Teachers are held accountable for using scripts in every lesson to ensure that consistency is kept across the school. Having all staff trained allowed us to use a range of staff members to support children with reading, as errors would be corrected in line with the Sounds-Write approach. In the early months of school, parents and carers are invited to Sounds-Write lessons to watch how their children are taught, along with teacher support of how to help their children read at home.

**Table 1** shows our PSC scores from 2014 to 2019. After three years of teaching using Sounds-Write, we have started to see progress in our PSC scores and, as a school, we are achieving percentages that are in line with national standards. There was a decrease in the percentage passing the PSC from 2018-2019. This was largely due to a high number of children joining the class from other schools late in their Reception year or during Year 1. They joined Princecroft School working below the national standard in reading and writing.

Table 1. Phonics Screening Check scores

Year	Princecroft	National
2014	64%	74%
2015	70%	77%
2016	60%	77%
Implementation of Sounds-Write		
2017	79%	81%
2018	94%	82%
2019	80%	82%

This case study will focus around the children who were in Year 2 during the academic year 2020-2021. These children were aged six to seven when the data was collected. It is important to note that these children have experienced disruption, including lockdowns, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in large amounts of time working from home.

Since starting in Reception, they have been taught using Sounds-Write so, by the end of Year 2, they had been taught the programme for three years. These Sounds-Write lessons were delivered to the whole class for 30 minutes a day. For those who were in need of additional intervention, they received this three times a week for 15 minutes in small groups with a teaching assistant who was trained in delivering Sounds-Write. These interventions were a way of filling any learning gaps the children had and used the Sounds-Write approach and the Sounds-Write scripted lessons to teach the sounds they did not know.

To ensure consistency throughout the lockdowns, children were given Sounds-Write activities to complete at home. This included syllabifying polysyllabic words and sorting words based on the spelling of a target sound. There was an expectation that children would say the sounds as they read and wrote the words. In the most recent lockdown, teachers used daily live lessons to teach Sounds-Write to ensure learning was maximised. Teachers continued to use the scripts to deliver their lessons and taught from units already covered to ensure that children were secure in the sounds they had learnt. The level of engagement for these Sounds-Write lessons was high on a daily basis.

### 3. Evaluation

Due to the pandemic, the children in this class did not take the PSC in Year 1 (June 2020). Instead they took the PSC in October 2021 (see [Table 2](#)). The mean score was 34.9 with 10% achieving the full 40 marks. The pass mark for the PSC is 32 out of 40. Child 19 did not take the PSC due to significant SEN.

Table 2. Phonics Screening Check scores – October 2021

Child	Score
C1	39
C2	37
C3	32
C4	34
C5	35
C6	33
C7	32
C8	38
C9	35
C10	32
C11	33
C12	39
C13	33
C14	38
C15	22
C16	33
C17	40
C18	40
C19	n/a
C20	38
C21	34

Of the 21 children in the cohort, ten were eligible for Pupil Premium\*, two received SEN support in school, one had an Education Health Care Plan\*, and two spoke EAL. [Table 3](#) shows a breakdown of the PSC scores for these groups of children, showing the percentage of children passing (achieving a score

of 32/40 or more) in each of the groups. Our school data for October 2021 is presented alongside the national data for 2019.

Table 3. Phonics Screening Check breakdown – % passing

	National (2019)	Princecroft (2021)
All students	82%	90% (19/21)
Students eligible for Pupil Premium*	71%	90% (9/10)
Students not eligible for Pupil Premium	84%	91% (10/11)
SEN Support		100% (2/2)
EHCP		0% (0/1)
EAL		100% (2/2)

In addition to the PSC, this cohort also took Young's *Parallel Spelling Tests*\* (PST) and the KS1 Reading SATs\* paper in June 2021. [Table 4](#) shows the data from both of these tests for this cohort.

Young's *Parallel Spelling Tests* scores show that the children's ability to spell is high. Of the 23 children tested, 20 children achieved a higher spelling age than their actual age. Of the other three, one was absent during the test, one had a spelling age equal to their chronological age, and the other child had a spelling age of only one month behind their chronological age.

In summer 2021, it was not an expectation for Year 2 to take the SATs papers. However, to assess the children's progress, we decided that it was a good indicator of how children's learning had progressed throughout KS1. Without the ability to decode, children cannot access this assessment. Through the precise lessons provided by the Sounds-Write programme and dedication to the consistent delivery of the Sounds-Write programme throughout lockdowns from the school, we have been able to achieve these reading SATs scores. Eight children were able to achieve a Greater Depth standard which means that they are working above the expected standard for their age. The SATs results provide clear evidence that the children's decoding skills through using Sounds-Write are strong and well-embedded. In both of these assessments many of the children achieved at or above the expected standard.

Table 4. Young's *Parallel Spelling Tests* and Reading SATs Scores Year 2 - June 2021

	Actual Age year & months	Young's PST		Reading SATs			Notes
		Spelling Age year & months	Raw Score (max 32)	Paper 1 (max 20)	Paper 2 (max 20)	Total (max 40)	
C1	7.8	8.1	19	11	10	21	
C2	7.9	10.5	32	20	19	39	
C3	6.10	11.0	33	16	16	32	
C4	7.5	8.0	18	13	11	24	
C5	7.1	7.1	12	8	6	14	Pupil Premium, EAL, SEN
C6	7.0	7.7	16	10	6	16	Military Family <sup>3</sup>
C7	6.11	7.4	14	19	5	24	
C8	7.9	9.0	25	19	19	38	
C9	7.1	7.7	16	7	9	16	Pupil Premium
C10	7.4	10.5	32	19	20	39	Pupil Premium
C11	7.0	9.3	27	19	18	37	
C12	6.11	8.8	24	14	8	24	Military Family
C13	6.11	7.7	16	13	11	24	Military Family
C14	6.11	8.8	24	14	16	30	
C15	6.10	8.6	23	19	14	33	
C16	7.3	9.3	27	18	17	35	
C17	7.1	9.1	26	18	18	36	
C18	7.7	9.9	30	20	17	37	Pupil Premium
C19	7.5	Absent	Absent	18	8	26	SEN
C20	7.7	9.9	30	19	17	36	
C21	7.0	8.2	20	19	17	36	
C22	7.4	8.0	18	8	9	17	
C23	7.6	7.5	15	13	2	15	Pupil Premium

3. Princecroft is close to a military base. Children from military families often do not settle into school as well as other children as they move frequently. This can affect progress and learning behaviours.

## 4. Recommendations

Sounds-Write has improved the teaching of decoding with associated improvements in reading and significantly improved spelling. It has given us a consistent approach that all teachers and adults working with children can use and allows the children to move through the school, building on their knowledge without having to learn a new approach.

After teaching the programme for an extended period of time, we have learnt how important it is to stick to the original wording of the scripts. Going back to these regularly and checking against them as you teach is necessary as it is easy to drift away, adding in additional language that is not important and can inadvertently confuse the students. Having consistent, high expectations in Sounds-Write lessons and being precise in language is essential. This goes as far as the expectations of presentation on boards. For example, children must draw lines as instructed to provide the most effective scaffold to support learning and support the teacher in identifying mistakes.

Sounds-Write provides a clear teaching structure to teach the phonetic code for reading and spelling. It is important that enough time is given for children to really embed new learning. We teach a new sound and the ways in which it can be spelled over an extended period of time so that once children can recognise it, they can revisit it through reading and retrieval practice. This has given our students more chances to cover the new sound-spelling correspondences they have been taught and embed them to provide fluency. This interleaving process also supports them in using more challenging skills with previously learnt units. Having high expectations of what children can achieve is crucial but not progressing through the programme until they have successfully achieved the skills and knowledge required will provide the best learning environment for the children.

As with any phonics programme, it is essential that all staff are committed to teaching it and have the required subject knowledge. The training for the Sounds-Write programme provides in-depth subject knowledge for teachers,

which supports them in their phonics lessons. However, knowledge can be easily forgotten if not revisited. Therefore, it is important that school leaders provide regular support to teachers to ensure confidence in the teaching of Sounds-Write. Support in subject knowledge is important for KS2 colleagues as Sounds-Write provides lessons that can be used throughout the primary age range. To ensure children become competent readers and spellers they need to continue to be taught phonics throughout KS2. Sounds-Write provides additional training in phonics that is specific to Years 3-6, which most of our KS2 teachers have now undertaken. This course shows teachers how to progress their Sounds-Write teaching when they have built up the essential skills through teaching the lessons provided from the original Sounds-Write training.

In our experience, we found that ensuring parents are as well-informed as possible about the approaches of Sounds-Write can then maximise the learning at home. Sounds-Write provides a very helpful online Course for Parents (and Carers), which the school encourages them to complete.

Our aims for the future are to develop the teaching of Sounds-Write in our new Nursery (age three). This will be an important step to find out what is most beneficial for our youngest learners to experience before they start Reception. We also need to continue to develop the planning and coverage in KS2 to ensure there is enough challenge and review of previous learning. The progression throughout Early Years Foundation Stage and KS1 is clear and we now need to have this in place for KS2.





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