

Evidence from a Primary SEN Teacher in 2008

I am an SEN teacher at Christ Church C of E Primary School, London SW3. The school was first made aware of the **Sound Reading System** a couple of years ago when a volunteer who had been trained in the programme began working with 3 dyslexic children at the school who were already receiving regular extra support. The progress these children made - in attitude, confidence and reading age - with this volunteer, who was NOT a trained teacher, was so significant that we invited Fiona Nevola to deliver a day's whole staff training. Subsequently I and two class teachers attended the 4 day training course and we are **now implementing the method throughout the school.**

This course has possibly had more of an impact on my teaching and on the outcomes of the children I teach than anything I have encountered in my 18 year teaching career. In the past I always hoped I would be able to teach a child to read - but the truth was I was never totally certain I would succeed, and in fact most certainly 'failed' several children. (Actually I didn't really know **how** to teach reading properly or quickly because my own training was inadequate.) Now, I feel confident I can teach anyone to read - because I have an exceptionally thorough understanding of our alphabetic code, the knowledge and skills that need to be taught in order to access this code and the sorts of activities that help embed these.

Earlier this year, I taught a Y5 boy once a week, who in February had a reading (accuracy) age of 7 years 7 months (Individual Reading analysis - NFER-Nelson). In July, after 13 hours teaching, his reading age had increased to 10 years (an increase of 2 years 5 months in a 5 and a half month period). All the other children in the school who were taught using this method reached - or exceeded - their end-of-year projected levels.

Up -date from the same teacher in the same primary school in the spring of 2014, emphasising that the key to successful teaching of reading and spelling is an understanding of the 'code' we use to write!

Today at Christchurch there have been changes: everyone is trained in the principles of SRS (new staff REALLY benefit from the extra training) as we use these principles throughout the school. We also use the SRS worksheets and word lists and activities (SRS Sound Sorting and Spell Spotting) but **SRS has been absorbed now into the schools way of doing things.** We use *Letters and Sounds* as we now teach their order of introducing the sounds to fit in with the Phonics Check. Our teachers put an SRS spin on it, **but the most important thing is that our teachers understand the code and how to teach it.** For example, the Reception class do their own versions of the invaluable Foundation exercises and all staff under-pin the teaching of spelling with the SRS word lists.

In its pure form, SRS is really only used for "Catch-up" purposes – and we have fewer and fewer children needing extra help, usually those that come in from other schools. **The idea of the code – and the code itself - is so ingrained in the children right from the beginning** now that very few (SEN) children come my way, or Serena's way, without any understanding of it. In fact, we very rarely have anyone beyond Year 2 who needs extra help with the mechanics of reading (there are children who need help with comprehension, but not decoding). In my teaching, I use the SRS word lists and word cards for sorting when I'm teaching Spelling and I tend to use a lot of the foundation stage sound processing and word building and your method of preparing texts for readers.

To me, **SRS has always been such a strong training tool.** If trainee teachers were trained using SRS, reading and spelling would I am sure be so much better taught, **as teachers would have a REAL understanding of the code** – and then be able to pick apart the

inconsistencies/weird sound choices in Letters and Sounds, and the Year 1 Phonics test... Of course their lecturers would have to have a proper understanding of it first too.....

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