

# John Perry Primary School



## Academically More Able Children Policy

Approved by: School Governing Body

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Last reviewed on: April 2017

Next review due by: April 2018

## Rationale

Children learn at different rates and at John Perry Primary we want all our children to be able to realise their full potential. For the majority children that will mean receiving first wave quality teaching in a whole class setting: they will work individually, collaboratively and as a whole class. Some children will receive occasional teaching in small groups outside the classroom and some will receive support at the one-to-one level because their needs require this because they may not be achieving what is expected of them. Our aim is to accelerate the learning of these children so they achieve expected outcomes.

AMA children are those who are exceeding expectations. This policy and guidance aims to address those children who are entitled to be stretched as far as possible and to offer parents and teachers opportunities to identify these pupils.

**The Ofsted School Inspection Handbook, July 2014** states: "Inspectors should pay particular attention to whether more able pupils in general and the most able in particular are achieving as they should."

John Perry Primary School will:-

- Identify AMA children at the school.
- Create a register for monitoring AMA children
- Notify the parents of pupils who have been identified as AMA and explain what action the school will take as a consequence of this
- Ensure that all staff are involved in challenging pupils to reach their full potential through extension work, enrichment activities or an accelerated curriculum

### 1. Introduction

1.1 At John Perry Primary School, we are committed to providing the best possible provision for pupils of all abilities. We plan our teaching and learning so that each child can aspire to the highest level of personal achievement. The purpose of this policy is to help ensure that we recognise and support the needs of those children in our school who have been identified as 'Most Able'.

1.2 In the national guidelines the terms are distinguished as follows:

The DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families), the predecessor of the Department for Education (DFE) defines AMA children as:

“Those children and young people with one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with potential to develop those abilities).” They can be identified in any year and amount to 7-10% of the school population, although we do not attempt to manipulate individual cohorts to ensure that this is so. Provision will be made for these children within the normal class teaching, but sometimes we will provide enrichment or extension activities to promote their skills and talents still further including visits to local schools with whom we work closely.

Academically More Able Children (AMA) are defined as those who have abilities in one or more subjects in the statutory school curriculum. They have the capacity for, or demonstrate, high levels of performance in a subject area. This also includes children who are leaders or role models and who display outstanding leadership and/or social skills.

## 2. Aims

- Provide a high quality curriculum and effective teaching.
- Identify AMA children in one or more areas of the curriculum.
- Provide opportunities to extend and challenge pupils through mastery tasks.
- Ensure that pupils achieve their full potential; meeting expected attainment and progress targets by developing children’s confidence.
- Provide extra-curricular activities which provide enrichment in different areas of the curriculum.

## 3. Identification

All children are different, but it has been shown that many AMA children share common characteristics because of their advanced thinking ability. Below is a list of the most common characteristics of AMA children. Different AMA children will have a different mixture of these, but each should display a majority of them.

AMA children:
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are able to learn quickly</li> <li>• have a rich vocabulary</li> <li>• have an excellent memory</li> <li>• have a long attention span</li> <li>• are early or avid readers</li> <li>• persevere when interested</li> <li>• have a wide range of interests</li> <li>• are good at puzzles</li> <li>• reason well (good thinkers)</li> <li>• show ability with numbers</li> <li>• show compassion</li> <li>• are perfectionists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have strong curiosity</li> <li>• are emotionally sensitive (feelings hurt easily)</li> <li>• have a high level of energy</li> <li>• prefer older companions/adults ☐</li> <li>• have a quirky or grown-up sense of humour</li> <li>• are concerned with justice and fairness</li> <li>• tend to question authority</li> <li>• have judgement mature for age at times</li> <li>• are highly creative</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are intense</li> <li>• are morally sensitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are keen observers</li> <li>• have a vivid imagination</li> </ul>

Parents and teachers of very able children have noticed the behaviours and characteristics listed below.

AMA children have:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn rapidly</li> <li>• An extensive vocabulary</li> <li>• Excellent memory</li> <li>• Reasons well</li> <li>• Strong curiosity</li> <li>• Mature for age</li> <li>• Good sense of humour</li> <li>• Keen observation</li> <li>• Compassion for others</li> <li>• Vivid imagination</li> <li>• Long attention span</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ☐ Ability with numbers</li> <li>☐ Concern with justice, fairness</li> <li>• ☐ Sensitivity</li> <li>☐ Wide range of interests</li> <li>☐ Ability with puzzles</li> <li>•</li> <li>☐ High energy levels</li> <li>Perfectionism</li> <li>•</li> <li>Questions authority</li> <li>Avid reader</li> <li>Prefers older companions</li> </ul>

(See **Appendix 1** for clarification of these points)

In order to identify AMA children, staff will use a mixture of resources.

These will include:-

- how they approach routine work in class and activities outside the classroom (some learners behave quite differently in the two situations);
- observing them systematically in a range of learning contexts, to identify those who demonstrate social or leadership skills, an aptitude for problem solving or acute listening skills;
- their responses to their work and talking with them about what they like, dislike, and what enables them to learn best;
- inviting them to reflect on and talk about their own strengths, interests and aspirations, perhaps in the context of personal target-setting;
- their initiative in tackling tasks or adapting conditions to suit circumstances;
- the progress they make and judging whether they achieve beyond the level of attainment expected for their age;
- their performance in national curriculum and other standardised tests, for example non-verbal reasoning tests and cognitive ability tests (CATs), or national tests and qualifications.
- recommendation from outside agencies

### **Responsibilities of the Senior Leadership**

John Perry Primary Senior Leadership Team must: -

- Ensure that the AMA register is up to date
- Support staff in the identification of AMA children
- Provide advice and support to staff on teaching and learning strategies
- Alert parents to children's particular or potential talents, skills or interests
- Sign-post potential avenues through which children could further develop their skills

### **Responsibilities of the AMA leader**

The John Perry Primary AMA leader must:

- Ensure staff have access to appropriate resources
- Identify the training needs of new members of staff
- Offer support and guidance to ensure staff are meeting the needs of AMA children

- Keep a register of AMA children
- Develop an action plan in line with priorities in the school SIP
- Monitor provision for AMA children and address shortcomings
- Seek opportunities for provision beyond the classroom and communicate these to parents, class teachers and support staff
- Ensure that AMA children are receiving high quality provision at all levels of the provision triangle
- Stay abreast of developments in current thinking about AMA provision

### **Responsibilities of class teachers and support staff**

John Perry Primary class teachers and support staff must:

- have a high degree of subject knowledge
- use outside agencies and advance curriculum materials where appropriate
- understand how to plan class work and homework in order to increase pace, breadth or depth
- use tasks and Assessment for Learning techniques that help pupils to develop perseverance and independence in learning
- use stimulating resources to scaffold learning experiences
- use ICT to extend and enhance pupil's work
- use higher-order questioning and investigative activities to further develop thinking skills
- facilitate opportunities to participate in activities outside school
- provide opportunities to develop problem solving, leadership, teamwork and communication skills

### **Responsibilities of School Governors**

It is the responsibility of the Governors to evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and the practice that it describes.

### **Social and emotional considerations**

We recognise that there is the potential for social stigmatisation to occur around the label of AMA children, and that, under certain undesirable circumstances, children could be the targets of negative attention as a result of being registered as AMA. Therefore, through encouragement of positive attitudes to learning, including SEAL/PSHE teaching, AFL techniques, reward schemes, and peer-working, we aim to ensure that AMA children are viewed by others as aspirational role-models.

## Appendix 1

### Academically More Able Children

**Learns Rapidly** – AMA children are able to learn rapidly and easily make connections, often jumping ahead of others. They often want to move on quickly and do not enjoy repetition.

**Extensive Vocabulary** – The majority of AMA children begin talking early (before 12 months old) and progress quickly through the stages. They can use complex sentence structures and are naturally able to understand difficult words and use them in the correct context.

There is also a small percentage of AMA children who are late talkers. These children are able to follow complex conversations and respond accordingly (although non-verbally). These children actually have an excellent understanding of language; but are not verbally expressive until much later than their peers.

**Excellent Memory** – Many AMA children have excellent memories. They are able to remember facts after being told only once or twice. They can remember the way to places they have been to only a few times. Some AMA children have very good detailed memories about things that happened when they were very young. They may not have such a good memory for instructions they are given as their minds can get distracted before they carry them out!

**Reasons Well** – AMA children are able to reason well in discussions and decisionmaking. Although their decisions and viewpoint may not always agree with those around them, there is often a logical thought process leading to them.

**Strong Curiosity (asking questions)** – As AMA children have an inbuilt capacity to learn quickly and a good memory, they want to know as much as they can about many things. This means they ask many questions about things around them or related to one another.

**Mature for Age** – Their developed thinking skills and perception means that AMA children often seem mature for their age. However, there are also times when AMA children appear to behave immaturely as well.

**Good Sense of Humour** – AMA children often have a well-developed sense of humour for their age. They are able to see irony in things and sometimes have a quirky viewpoint. They may develop the use of sarcasm and witty banter far earlier than their peers and this can sometimes lead to difficulties with friendships. Although adults will be able to appreciate and understand an AMA child's highly developed sense of humour, other children might not get the joke at all.

**Keen Observation** – AMA children often pick up a lot of information from the world around them and their excellent memory means that much of this information is stored, leading to great observational ability and quick learning.

**Compassion for Others** – Many AMA children have great compassion for other people and are very perceptive to other people's feelings. This can cause them to become upset at times when confronted with suffering.

**Vivid Imagination** – Whilst most young children are imaginative, many AMA children have a vivid imagination, having pretend friends and creating characters

for cuddly toys, although their imagination may be limited to a particular area of interest. They can invent complex, imaginative games that other children of the same age find difficult to follow.

**Long Attention Span** – AMA children are generally able to concentrate on areas of interest for long periods of time. They may have difficulty concentrating fully on something they find tedious and may look as if they are not paying attention (daydreaming or fidgeting); although if asked they can often repeat what is being said. Because their minds are working quickly they may seem to flit from one subject to another, although these may be logically connected in their thought process. As AMA children tend to learn quickly, they do not need repetition and this can cause them to become frustrated when asked to do more of the same.

**Ability with Numbers** – AMA children often have ability with numbers well beyond their age group. They can find it easy to grasp the abstract ideas in mathematics and can relate knowledge to new situations. However, it should be noted that some AMA children are more interested in words and language or artistic pursuits than numbers and hence may not excel in mathematics.

**Concern with Justice and Fairness** – AMA children often appear to be overly concerned with justice and fairness. They understand the need for rules and they often hear the rule and adhere to it. They can get very upset when others are not sticking to the rules. This can sometimes become a problem during play times at school as other children may in fact enjoy breaking rules and pushing boundaries away from the restrictions of the classroom. AMA children may require pastoral support to understand that not everyone shares their diligent observance of rules.

**Sensitivity** – AMA children are emotionally sensitive, causing them to become angry through frustration, upset over ‘silly’ things or overly scared. Some AMA children are also sensitive to loud noises, have a heightened sense of smell, taste or touch which can cause them distress.

**Wide Range of Interests** – Many AMA children are interested in a variety of subjects; they soak up information and their knowledge and understanding of the world is exceptional from an early age. They are often passionate about certain subjects and will learn about these deeply, some for a short period and others throughout life.

**Ability with Puzzles** – AMA children are normally very good at problem solving. This shows itself from a young age with the ability to complete jigsaw puzzles beyond those recommended for their age. Often they need less prompting than other children and are able to work independently on puzzles that interest them, be they word-based, number-based or logic-based.

**High Energy Level** – Many AMA children have a high energy level from a very young age. This can impact upon sleep patterns from birth. As toddlers, these children can be difficult to handle and are constantly on the go. Children with high energy levels need a lot of physical exercise and may learn better outdoors or after exercise. Having high energy can mean that a child fidgets and finds it difficult to sit still, except when fully engaged in a task. This characteristic shows itself more when agitated or excited.

**Perfectionist** – Some AMA children have a tendency towards perfectionism, and for some this can mean they have a fear of failure resulting in them not wanting to try new things if they think their performance may fall short of perfection.



AMA children can be very self-critical or become emotional if things don't go well in their eyes (even if others feel they did what was expected of them). **Passionate about Interests** – Whilst AMA children may not always appear to be paying close attention, there are often very passionate in their chosen areas of interest. This can cause problems in school as they can become upset when an adult tries to get them to move on from their preferred tasks. This kind of intensity can be difficult for others to cope with but there are obvious advantages as they get older and are able to focus.

**Questions Authority** – Many AMA children question authority and feel it is their right to do so because they may know better. Unfortunately, their manner can sometimes seem arrogant to figures of authority. For the child, respect is not gained merely by being an adult, it needs to be earned. Adults can earn respect by listening to the child and acting fairly. It may take time for AMA children to respect an adult; but at the same time, it is important for parents to reinforce the importance of following instructions set out by teachers and other adults as a persistent failure to do so may well result in disciplinary measures. **Avid Reader**

– Many AMA children learn to read easily (some very early) and enjoy different kinds of books to entertain them (imaginative fiction) and extend their learning (topic and non-fiction books). Many enjoy poetry because of the play with words and sounds and the different ways of making sense of the world. AMA children often progress very quickly from picture books and devour all kinds of reading material. Some AMA children learn to read easily but enjoy a more limited range of material, for example only reading non-fiction for learning about particular topics. Some may have a learning difficulty that prevents them from reading easily, such as dyslexia.

**Prefers Older Companions** – Many, but by no means all, AMA children have difficulty finding friends within their age group. Many prefer the company of older children and adults to bounce their ideas off and play games with. When they are young, this is because they are thinking in more complex ways and are interested in different things to children of the same age.

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