

INSPECTION REPORT

**OUR LADY & ST EDWARD'S
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Preston

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119579

Headteacher: Mrs E McGrath

Reporting inspector: Ms S Billington
4343

Dates of inspection: 7th – 8th February 2000

Inspection number: 195325

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Lightfoot Lane
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Preston
Lancashire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Fr B Woods

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Our Lady & St Edward's is an average sized Roman Catholic primary school catering for children aged four to eleven years. There are 224 pupils on roll taught in seven classes, with an average of 32 children. Almost all children are white; one speaks English as an additional language. About two per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below average. Eleven per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is below average.

Almost all children benefit from pre-school education before starting school. The overall level of attainment of children starting school is above average.

The school serves a stable community and has strong links with the local Catholic church.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is effective overall with some significant strengths, but there are also some areas of weakness. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 are well above average. At the end of Key Stage 1, overall standards in reading and writing have declined over the past three years and although 1999 results were in line with national averages, they are lower than those of similar schools. There has been a recent improvement in reading but standards in writing are too low. The school provides a broad and balanced education. Teaching overall is satisfactory but there are weaknesses in a significant number of lessons. The new headteacher has a clear sense of purpose and a determination to improve overall standards. Until recently, the rate of improvement since the last inspection has been too slow. Overall the school provides value for money, although there are weaknesses in the strategic use of the budget which currently has a large surplus.

What the school does well

- Standards in English and mathematics are consistently good at the end of Key Stage 2
- Pupils are making good progress in reading in Key Stage 1 and in the reception class progress is very good
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and leave well prepared for the next stage in education
- The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction and purpose.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 are too low
- There is a lack of clear targets to enable the evaluation of the impact of new initiatives on standards
- There is a lack of pace and challenge in a significant number of lessons.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Whilst there have been some improvements, the rate of improvement has been unsatisfactory. Standards at Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics have risen but standards in English at Key Stage 1 have

declined. Standards in writing and information technology were found to be unsatisfactory in the last inspection; these are still areas of weakness and still feature as priorities in the school development plan. Provision for design and technology has improved. The need to improve assessment procedures was identified, but a policy for assessment has only recently been implemented. The need for a new staffing structure that was identified in the last inspection was quickly addressed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A*	A	A*	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A
science	A	A	B	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics are well above average and English test results place the school in the top five per cent of all schools. Inspection findings bear out the good standards shown in national tests over the past three years. In science, standards are average overall, pupils have good knowledge of all areas of the subject and their skills in investigation and experimenting are improving.

At Key Stage 1 standards in English have declined over the past three years whilst standards in mathematics have generally been above the national average. Test results in reading were below average in 1999, but the inspection found that standards are improving and children are generally making good progress in this area. Standards in writing are below average. Standards in science are average.

The under fives make very good progress in reading and many make good progress in numeracy.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Children have very positive attitudes, are well motivated and develop good work habits
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Generally good and sometimes very good, particularly for the older pupils
Personal development and relationships	Very good, children form constructive relationships, show initiative and willingly take on responsibilities
Attendance	Very good, attendance rates are very high compared to national averages.

Children's attitudes, relationships and personal development are strengths of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

At the time of the inspection, there had been several recent changes in teaching arrangements because of long-term staff absences. Several teachers were new to the school or had just taken on a new class. In 86% of lessons teaching was satisfactory and occasionally good. In 14% of lessons, teaching was unsatisfactory. Teachers' high expectations in the reception class and in the upper part of Key Stage 2 enable the children to make good progress in literacy and numeracy. In some lessons, the pace of learning is slow and tasks set lack sufficient challenge to meet the needs of pupils, particularly the higher attainers. There is a good level of support and provision for children with special educational needs to enable them to make progress in their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2 is broad and balanced. The curriculum for the under fives has a good focus on literacy and numeracy but lacks opportunities for creative and physical development
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Well-managed and pupils get good support
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good for spiritual, moral and social development. Links with the parish and opportunities in the taught curriculum enhance pupils' spiritual and moral development. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Individual pupils are known well and the school provides a good level of care

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The new head has a clear sense of purpose, has accurately identified priorities for improvement and has begun to bring about necessary changes, for example by implementing an assessment policy

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well organised and provide a good level of support but lack a strategic view of how the school might develop
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is beginning to analyse data to identify curriculum strengths and weaknesses but lacks measurable targets to assess improvements
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory. The budget has a large surplus and there is no strategic view of how this is to be used to secure improvements.

The school is guided by the LEA in setting the budget and applying the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are well behaved and moral values are strongly upheld • The school responds well to their concerns and suggestions • There are good procedures to settle children into school • Standards are improving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of homework • The range of activities • The way the school works with parents.

The inspection generally endorses parents' positive views of the school, but found that while standards in Key Stage 2 have improved there has been a decline in English at Key Stage 1. Concerns about the range of activities are not justified; the curriculum is generally broad and is enhanced by some extra-curricular activities and residential visits for older pupils. The school is working to improve information for parents. A homework policy has just been introduced that will formalise systems for homework.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards in English and mathematics are consistently good at the end of Key Stage 2

1. The school attains standards in English and mathematics that are well above the national average and also well above those of similar schools. These very high standards have been maintained consistently over the past three years.
2. Pupils read widely, enjoy a range of literature and talk sensibly about why they like certain books or authors. Their reading tastes range from the very latest in children's literature to more established authors such as CS Lewis and Arthur Ransom. The higher attaining pupils provide measured judgements about particular books discussing the imaginative content and the strong story lines that particularly appeal to them. They listen to each other, respond to what their friends say and robustly defend their preferences. Most use contents and indexes to locate information and are familiar with the potential for using the computer for research.
3. Written work is of a high standard. Pupils write in a wide range of styles and have a good grasp of the appropriateness of different types of writing. Written work based on the story of Scott of the Antarctic showed a mature understanding of the abbreviated and almost 'staccato' style of diary writing. Imaginative written work provides a vivid picture of characters and good use of vocabulary adds to the atmosphere and mood of the story. The written work of higher attaining pupils is sophisticated and shows a very good use of language to create effect. In a story set in Victorian times, one pupil had written 'labourers in straggling groups came stumbling and yawning into the streets...'. Another had used the text of 'Wind in the Willows' to help to create characters in a story and described one character as follows '.....a large grin spread across his face and his laugh was extraordinarily clear.....'. The majority of the written work is well presented, grammar and punctuation are used accurately and spelling skills are generally very secure.
4. Standards in mathematics are also high. Most pupils have a very secure grasp of their tables, understand place value and use the four number operations efficiently. Average and high attaining pupils have well developed mental strategies for working things out, for instance using rounding up and down when adding and subtracting large numbers. Pupils, particularly girls, are especially strong in explaining what they have done. They provided, for example, a lucid and sensible explanation of how they calculated the cost of a pair of £42 trainers with a 25% reduction. Most pupils are familiar with working in decimals and their equivalent fractions and percentages. They calculate using negative numbers and are generally good at using what they know to solve problems presented in words rather than numbers. Pupils also use their numeracy in subjects such as science where they collect and record data and present it in graphs or charts. Most pupils are knowledgeable about the characteristics of particular shapes; they are familiar with a range of mathematical vocabulary such as radius, diameter and perimeter and work out area using formulae.
5. This high level of attainment in basic skills ensures that the majority of pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education.

Pupils are making good progress in reading in Key Stage 1 and in the reception class progress is very good

6. When children enter school most have already attained an above average range of skills in reading. This good base is successfully built upon and the majority of children make good progress towards becoming fluent and enthusiastic readers. The progress is particularly marked during the first year of school where the results of standardised tests show that many children have made good progress from the level at which they entered school.
7. In reception children extend their reading skills through a range of approaches. The impact of the literacy hour is positive and the teaching strategies are successfully widening children's sight, vocabulary introducing them to new words in interesting and imaginative contexts. For instance the use of a 'wanted' poster about a pirate provoked plenty of discussion about what he looked like and how he behaved. The words and phrases introduced were successfully reinforced in the follow-up activities. During the discussion children also enhanced their understanding of sounds and, for instance, worked out how to read a word for themselves by applying their knowledge of initial sounds. The activity also promoted progress in reading by emphasising to children how they could use picture clues to try and understand unfamiliar words. When tackling books children read from memory and use the pictures to make sense of the story; familiarity with the storyline and a good degree of confidence reinforces their enjoyment and contributes to their positive attitudes to books and reading.
8. As children move into Year 1 they develop increasing fluency in reading, talk about their favourite stories and are keen to read. They consolidate and extend their phonic understanding and this, together with their making good use of picture clues, enables them to confidently tackle new words. Most pupils are also developing a greater awareness of what they are reading and consequently are beginning to correct themselves when it is apparent that what they have read does not quite make sense.
9. In Year 2 reading skills are beginning to be well established. The majority of pupils read accurately and are beginning to take more notice of punctuation and so their reading is becoming increasingly expressive. The regular book reviews that they write are successfully encouraging them to think more about stories, what the characters are like and the sequence of events. The higher attaining pupils happily recall, often in considerable detail, the stories that they have previously read. Children read regularly at home and the support that parents give to them is a valuable element in their progress.
10. By the time that children start Key Stage 2 many already have a secure base of reading skills and well developed and sensible preferences for particular authors and types of stories.

Pupils have positive attitudes to school and leave well prepared for the next stage in their education

11. By the time that pupils leave the school almost all are hardworking, mature and sensible. They enjoy learning and have very well established work habits that have the potential to serve them well in future.
12. Throughout the school children work hard, concentrate and take time and trouble to ensure that their work is presentable and accurate. They work harmoniously, helping each other and working collaboratively to build and sustain constructive relationships. For instance, during a literacy lesson in Year 3 four boys worked very successfully together to refine their performance of the poem 'The Skeleton House'. They thought

carefully about who was to read the script and how they could provide a range of sound effects to enhance the atmosphere. As one boy dragged his hands slowly and deliberately over a radiator the high pitched squeaking noise added to the eeriness of the atmosphere. Other pupils enjoyed and appreciated the final performance.

13. The older pupils help with the younger pupils at break times and meal times. They remain in the infants playground, assisting the teacher on duty when appropriate. Overall, pupils play together constructively; games during the breaks are often vigorous but are played in a good spirit and are generally good natured. Children also have opportunities to use their initiative, for instance organising sponsored events in support of charities such as the Catholic Association for Overseas Development.
14. Pupils are confident and articulate; they happily talk about their work in a friendly and relaxed manner with each other and with visitors to school. They are enthusiastic about their work, take it very seriously and take a pride in their successes. The older pupils are well organised and arrive in lessons ready to learn with materials and equipment readily to hand. Throughout the school children learn appropriate work habits; even the youngest children concentrate hard and show a keen determination to succeed. They enthusiastically take part in lessons answering questions and offering their own ideas. They are thoughtful and often deliberate in the contributions that they make. In a Year 2 history lesson, pupils carefully considered the ages of different modes of transport, looking for clues and identifying what these might mean. One young boy was in no doubt that the horse drawn vehicle was the oldest since the use of the horse clearly indicated that 'they did not have engines in those days'.
15. Comments from parents confirm the positive attitudes of pupils. They are very clear that their children enjoy school, 'respect and care for each other' and feel very much that they are part of a close community that also includes the home, school and parish. Fundraising events and activities organised by the Parent Teachers' Association include pupils who often have the responsibility for organising their own stalls and activities independently and respond well to the opportunity to use their initiative.

The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction and purpose

16. The recently appointed headteacher has quickly established a clear sense of direction to improve the work of the school. Through a careful and astute evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, she has created a credible and realistic set of priorities that are focused upon bringing about improvements. The arrangements that the headteacher has put in place to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the school's work is providing a sound evidence base on which to take appropriate action. For instance, the need to improve the standards in information technology has highlighted the need for staff training; the analysis of test data has indicated the relative weaknesses in standards in writing and a similar exercise has highlighted that some aspects of science teaching need attention.
17. Curriculum co-ordinators are being successfully encouraged to play a more active role in bringing about improvements and there is evidence of this having some impact across the school. Co-ordinators have been working with colleagues during lessons and making evaluations of the needs of their subjects. Again the results of these activities are successfully feeding into a programme of staff development to enhance and upgrade teachers' own subject expertise.
18. The headteacher has provided a renewed impetus to address some outstanding issues from the last inspection report that were not followed through in a sufficiently rigorous manner. She has a clear vision for the school and a quiet determination to preserve the

current high standards and to improve those weaker aspects of the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 are too low

19. Results of national tests show a decline in standards in writing over the past three years. In 1999, results were well below those of schools with a similar intake. Progress in writing varies through the key stage from good to unsatisfactory and a significant proportion of children, particularly higher attainers, do not make the progress that they should.
20. The youngest children generally make good progress in the early stages of writing, moving from copying under the teacher's writing to writing captions using some individual letters. Their hand control improves and they start to write some recognisable words such as 'I' and 'see'. However, opportunities for them to write independently and to experiment with representing their ideas, for example in writing lists and notes in role play, are too limited.
21. As children move through Key Stage 1 their written work improves, but the rate of improvement is slow. Children retell stories and write accounts of their activities, but these are sometimes confused and lack a clear structure. They learn to demarcate sentences and some begin to introduce a range of punctuation such as speechmarks. The majority of children effectively use their skills in writing lists, directions and instructions, for example about how to make a kite. However, there is limited opportunity for children to engage in extended story writing and to draft and edit for improvements in their written work and this slows the rate of progress. Higher attainers often engage in skills practice work that their independent written work shows that they do not need. In literacy lessons, many pupils spend too much time on low-level tasks that involve copying or putting missing words in sentences; they cope easily but learn little. Children often go through a similar programme of tasks regardless of their existing levels of skills and this slows their rate of progress.

There is a lack of clear targets to enable the evaluation of the impact of new initiatives on standards

22. The headteacher has been instrumental in identifying weaknesses and developing strategies to bring about improvements. There are action plans in place to guide the process of working for improvements, but these plans lack measurable targets to assess the success of the strategies in improving standards and quality. For example, the need to improve standards in writing has been identified, but success criteria in the action plan are too generalised to assess whether there has been a positive impact on standards.
23. The governing body has allocated additional funding from budget reserves to support some important initiatives such as the introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours. In 1998-9, £10,000 was allocated for resources for the teaching of literacy. However, whilst governors have had positive feedback from teachers and parents on the provision of the new material, there has been no formal evaluation of the impact of a significant expenditure on standards in literacy. Governors recognise the need to use the considerable surplus in the budget for the benefit of children currently attending the school but lack objective information on the impact of earlier spending decisions on which to base a strategic plan for future expenditure.

There is a lack of pace and challenge in a significant number of lessons

24. Whilst teaching in the majority of lessons is satisfactory overall, there is scope for improvement. In good lessons, teachers have high expectations and a determination that children will succeed. For example, in a lesson with reception children the teacher provided good opportunities for children to use their developing literacy skills in matching and reading some difficult words such as 'several'. They were encouraged to use their knowledge of sounds to write independently and to attempt their own spellings, for example in writing 'chuse'.
25. However, some lessons lack this sense of purpose and too much time is spent on practice and consolidation. This was evident in a literacy lesson in which a lengthy time was taken asking individual children to split and re-write compound words on the whiteboard whilst the rest of the class watched. This was followed by a group activity that involved joining two words on a worksheet to make a compound word; some children then re-wrote these on the computer. As the children were very quick to identify compound words, the lesson did little to improve their literacy or information technology skills. In some lessons, teachers spend too much time asking questions and do not provide enough opportunity for children to use what they already know. For example, in a lesson based on de la Mare's 'The Listeners', pupils were asked to pick out the 'good words', but there was no discussion of the ways in which the words chosen conveyed atmosphere and children were urged to answer quickly rather than to reflect on and extend their thoughts on the impact of the language.
26. The lack of pace in a significant number of lessons slows the rate of pupils' progress whilst the lack of challenge in some of the tasks set results in many pupils, particularly the higher attainers, marking time as they practice something that they can already do.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

27. In order to further raise standards and improve the quality of education, governors, headteacher and staff should:
 - Raise standards in writing at Key Stage 1 by:
 - ensuring that children make a consistent rate of progress in writing in a range of forms for a variety of purposes;
 - providing more opportunities for children to write independently;
 - ensuring that skills practice is carefully matched to children's needs and prior attainment.

- Implement strategies to evaluate the effect of specific initiatives on quality and standards by:
 - ensuring that action plans have measurable targets against which improvements can be assessed;
 - introducing systems to enable the objective assessment of the impact of decisions on expenditure.

- Improve the overall quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that lessons move at a rate which enables learning to move on;
 - ensuring that tasks provide sufficient challenge and enable children to make progress in their learning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	14
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	7

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	14	71	14	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	-	224
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	-	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	-	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	-	33

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	2.6
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	19	15	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	17	19
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	30	31	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88	91	97
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	16	14
	Girls	14	14	12
	Total	32	30	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94	88	76
	National	82	86	87

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	14	18	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	13	13
	Girls	17	18	18
	Total	30	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94	97	97
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	13	13
	Girls	14	17	17
	Total	27	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84	94	94
	National	68	69	75

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	-
Black – African heritage	-
Black – other	1
Indian	-
Pakistani	-
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	-
White	199
Any other minority ethnic group	-

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.7
Average class size	32

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	147

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	-	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	-	-
Other minority ethnic groups	-	-

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
	£
Total income	325,632
Total expenditure	330,257
Expenditure per pupil	1,436
Balance brought forward from previous year	65,617
Balance carried forward to next year	60,992

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	160
Number of questionnaires returned	72

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	43	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	50	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	57	8	1	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	49	29	0	3
The teaching is good.	36	56	7	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	60	13	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	43	4	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	43	4	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	25	50	21	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	42	47	6	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	56	6	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	40	26	6	11