

LOVE-RESPECT-FLOURISH

St. Mary's Catholic School Newsletter

Issue 16 - 19th January 2024



3 Year School Development Plan Update

Mr Johnston - Headteacher

We have reflected on the progress we are making to our ten objective on the school development plan since September 2023, and I promised when I introduced the plan to the school community to give regular updates about how we are doing. Looking back over the last term, I am very satisfied with how we are meeting the plans that have been set out, a flavour of which is summarised below:

Objective 1: Catholic Life—a range of activities and events are now in action, with 'Living Prayer Walls' in every classroom, Miss McHugh leads a revitalised Sixth Form Chaplaincy team, the Chapel being refreshed and retreats have been completed across KS3.

Objective 2: Challenge—The teaching and learning focus is on the theme of 'Rise to the Challenge' including the first SMCS Teaching Conference (2 days INSET) in November. Lots of the teachers are now part of Mr Diggory's 'Professional Development Team' bring new ideas and research based strategies into the classroom to continually improve and provide challenge for all.

Objective 3: Sixth Form—Mr Noble is doing an excellent job as the new Director of Sixth Form, alongside the Year 12 and Year 13 Managers. 11 students (a fantastic number) have applied to Oxford or Cambridge this year (we wish them luck!). Students are excellent role models offering peer mentoring and taking advantage of an enhanced range of enrichment opportunities on offer.

Objective 9: Rewards and Consequences—Mrs Hayden has launched the new system this term after extensive consultation. Initial indications are very positive, and it is making a difference. About 9000 HPs have been awarded across the school recognising excellence and consistent effort.

Objective 6: Racial Justice, Equality and Diversity—see the plans for next week! (below!)
There will be a questionnaire for parents sent out early next week to hear your thoughts on the school and in particular the Rewards and Consequences system. Have a good weekend. God Bless.



NEXT WEEK: Racial Justice Week
"Cherishing every child in our care as a unique thumbprint of God"

UPCOMING EVENTS

Week Commencing Monday 22nd January
Racial Justice Week

Wednesday 31st January 2024
Pre-Ski Trip Info Evening (7pm)

Thursday 1st February 2024
Year 9 Options Evening

Monday-Friday 5th-9th February 2024
National Apprenticeship Week

Thursday 8th February 2024
Year 9 Parents Evening



St Francis of Assisi
CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

Racial Justice Week 22-26th January

There will be a number of events, activities, assemblies and learning opportunities across the week to celebrate our diversity as a school community.

The Refectory will also be serving food from across the world!

TERM DATES 2024-5

Please note the revised term dates for the next academic year as published in these Headlines and on our website.

By publishing these dates early, we expect parents not to be booking family holidays during school term-time. Thank you.



Verse of the Week

Year 12 Student Nathania has chosen Hebrews 12:1-2

Verse

"As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses round us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross!

On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right-hand side of God's throne."



Study

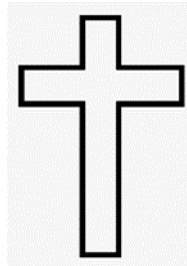
This scripture - put simply, explains to us that yes our pasts are filled with sins, mistakes, temptations that we couldn't overtake BUT there is no need to still feel any shame or any guilt.

It literally mentions how Jesus felt no disgrace of dying on the cross as now He is seated on the right - hand side of God.

The scripture says that we should literally rid ourselves and run with determination the race that lies ahead of us.



***Stop letting your past get in the way of
the race ahead of us.
Do not let it hinder your journey to eternal life.***





16-19 Bursary Fund Application

St Mary's Catholic School is able to offer to help students with the cost of studying. The bursary fund is available for 16-19 year olds in full time education. Your circumstances may have changed since September 2023 so the information below may be of assistance in helping and supporting your child with the financial cost of study for their Sixth Form education.

There are two types of bursary available, a Vulnerable Bursary and Discretionary Bursary.

Vulnerable Bursary

If you fall into one of the following categories, then you fall into the higher priority group and will receive a Vulnerable Bursary to help with the cost of studying:

- You are in or recently left local authority care
- You get Income Support or Universal Credit in your own name
- You get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in your own name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC)
- You get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in your name and either Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit (UC)

We do require original evidence from external agencies, key worker/social worker or evidence of benefit in your own name.

Discretionary Bursary

If you live at home with your parent(s) or carer(s) who receive benefits you fall into the lower priority group and MAY be eligible for financial help from the Discretionary Fund.

You may also get help from the Discretionary Bursary Fund if you are a young carer, or have an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Discretionary Bursaries that institutions award to meet individual needs. For example, trips, meals, books and equipment.

Other – Based on household income being under **£21,000** – this includes whatever your family receives (salary, pension, benefits and or tax credits 2023/2024) on an annual basis. Evidence will be required to support this. Students eligible for this may receive termly payments plus other payments for example, to support travel costs, contributions to residential trips etc.

Students will also need to meet the schools behaviour, attendance and punctuality expectations in order to receive payment.

Sixth Form students can download the Bursary Form below. Please return completed forms to Miss McHugh Deputy Headteacher with any supporting documentation all completed application forms, the original Tax Credit Award Notice (showing the household income for 2022/2023) and any other supporting evidence needed to be submitted **with the application**. **Application forms can be found on our website:** <https://www.stmarys.net/16-19bursary>

For more information about the 16-19 Bursary Fund can be found on the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>





Year 10 Problem Solving Event



Student Report by Barnaby

On Friday 12th January, Mr Antwi conducted a problem-solving challenge in the hall, inviting sets one and two to work in teams and solve complicated problems.

We participated in this challenge to open our minds to the fact that there is not a fixed way to answer a question, as Mr Palmer said was to show us that, "Maths is not about what you should do, it is about what you can do."

With the help from sixth formers (Further Maths Students), the teams battled through many tough questions, using trigonometry and Circle Theorems as swords and shields, finally being explained by Mr Antwi.

I personally found that it was interesting to see other people in my team think in separate ways to me, and it was good having many different minds working on one question.

Overall, the lesson helped us realise that a question is not always going from A to B, but it is about how you go from A to B and the way you think about a problem.



Student Report by Ezekiel

A low murmur of voices filled the hall. Anticipation for what was to come. On Friday 12th January, groups of Year 10 students gathered for an hour of problem-solving.

Led by Mr Antwi, the session was aimed at developing the strategies students use to approach problems, using their current understanding of maths. With the help of Sixth Form volunteers, teams of pupils worked on various questions, with particular focus put on their methods to arrive at an answer.

Many of the concepts were familiar to the students, such as graph work, or problems on circles. The difficulty lied in the application of their knowledge. Initially, the problems served as more of a refresher, but later, the questions were more challenging.

Students were encouraged to work collaboratively, sharing their thinking with each other frequently. After a certain amount of time, Mr Antwi would share the solutions, accompanied with a detailed explanation of the steps involved to get to those answers. By the end of the session, the students were exposed to more creative ways of thinking to approach problems in maths.





Year 10 Problem Solving Event

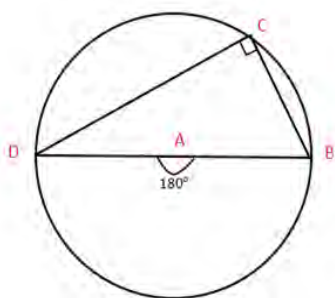
Student Report by Jaynelle

The problem-solving activity involving Set 1 and 2 was a great team building experience, we got the chance to work with our peers and Further Maths students to apply our classroom knowledge to exam questions.

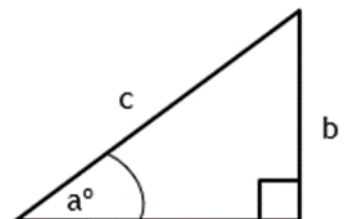
In my opinion, the problems that we were given were a reasonable mix of challenging questions that tested our understanding and required us to explain and prove our methods on paper as well as out loud.

This enabled us to share our different thought processes. The Further Maths students were easy to talk to when we needed help but still challenged us to work out the answer by ourselves.

Overall, it was a good experience as it gave me the opportunity to strengthen my problem-solving skills.



problem
solving





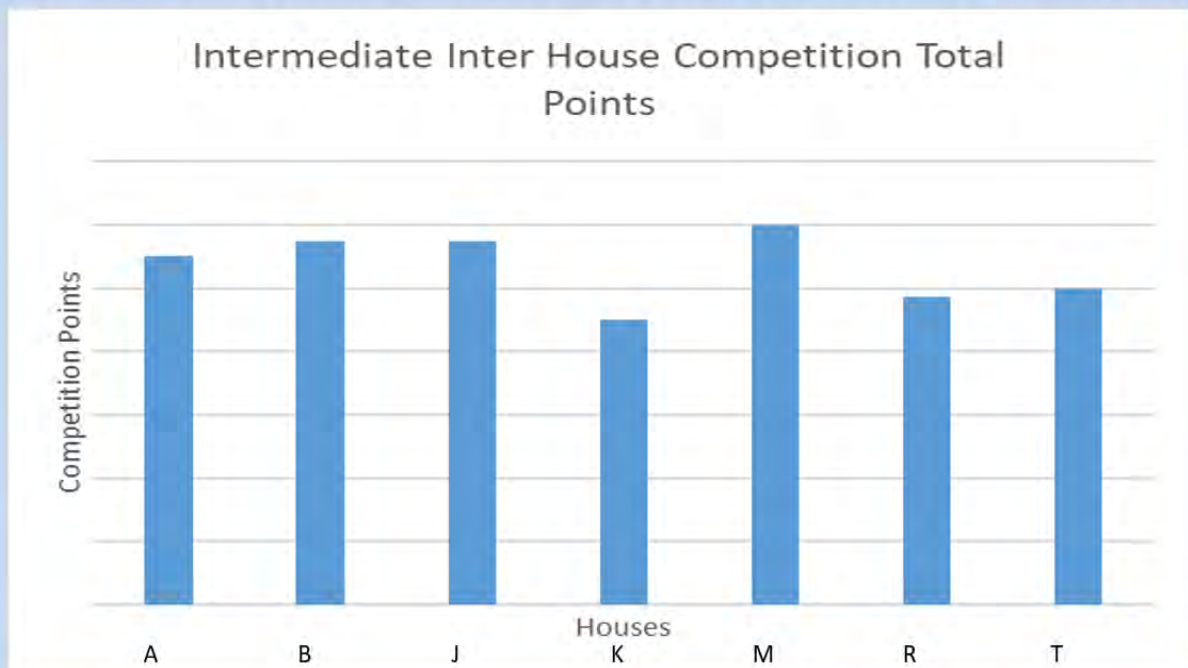
Inter House Competition Points



Junior Inter House Competition Total Points



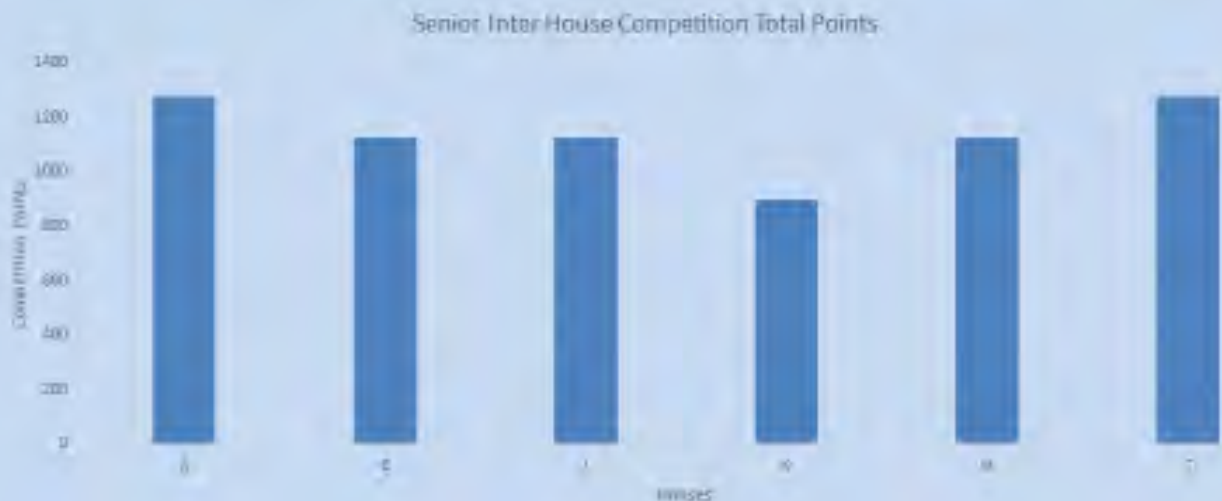
Intermediate Inter House Competition Total Points





Inter House Competition Points

Senior Inter House Competition Total Points



Overall Inter House Competition Total Points





Inter House Competitions ~ Spring Term

Darts



Dragons Den



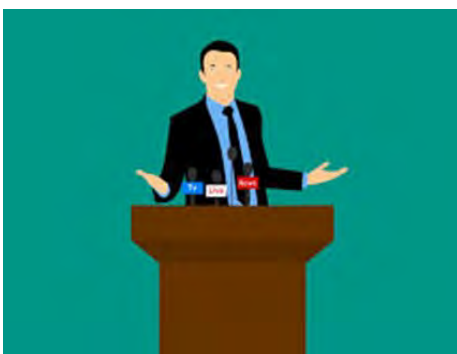
Dodgeball



Benchball



Public Speaking



Football & Netball





Artist in Focus



ARTIST IN FOCUS: Dulcie L, Year 13

Why do you study or love Art? Tell us about your journey and who you are...

I love the creative freedom that Art gives me and how you can share your own ideas on a more personal level. I also love Art A level as you become more invested in your own work, as it is all your own and the sky is the limit to allow you to always grow and develop.

Who inspires you?

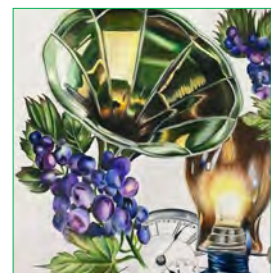
Not only do artists inspire me and my work but my peers also inspire me and play a massive role in the development of my work. It is really lovely being around a creative group of people, supporting one another and sharing skills and ideas.

Where do you want to go and what do you want to do when you leave St Mary's?

I would love to carry on working in this creative environment, going on to work as an interior designer. Sharing my passion with others and developing my skills and style that I have found and learned at St Mary's.

What advice would you give aspiring artists here at St Mary's?

My advice would be, don't compare yourself to others, everyone's Art is so different and that is what makes it so unique, special and impressive.





Revised Term Dates 2024-2025



St Mary's Catholic School

Term Dates for September 2024 – July 2025

Autumn Term

Monday 2nd September 2024 – Friday 20th December 2024

INSET Day (Trust AM, School PM)	Monday 2 nd September 2024
External Sixth Form Induction Day	Tuesday 3 rd September 2024
Pupil return (Year 7 and Year 12)	Wednesday 4 th September 2024
All Pupils in school	Thursday 5 th September 2024
Open Evening (early finish)	Wednesday 25 th September 2024
Pupils absent (Half Term)	Monday 28 th October – Friday 1 st November 2024
Pupils return	Monday 4 th November 2024
Pupils absent (INSET Day 1 – Staff Conference)	Thursday 21 st November
Pupils absent (INSET Day 2 – Staff Conference)	Friday 22 nd November

Spring Term

Monday 6th January 2025 – Friday 4th April 2025

Start of term for students	Monday 6 th January 2025
All Pupils in school	Tuesday 7 th January 2025
Pupils absent (Half Term)	Monday 17 th February – Friday 21 st February 2025
Pupils return	Monday 24 th February 2025

Summer Term

Tuesday 22nd April 2025 – Friday 18th July 2025

All Pupils in school	Tuesday 22 nd April 2025
May Bank Holiday	Monday 6 th May 2025
Pupils absent (Half Term)	Monday 26 th May – Friday 30 th May 2025
Pupils return	Monday 2 nd June 2025

Notes:

2 INSET days converted to Twilight sessions



Students invited to attend Herts Music Group



**Hertfordshire
Music Service**

Music Groups for all school ages

Join a music group or ensemble at

Bishop's Stortford Music Centre

Based at Birchwood High School CM23 5BD



- ♪ excellent musical tuition
- ♪ highly experienced music teachers
- ♪ convenient venue
- ♪ friendly and helpful group members
- ♪ learning and playing modern and popular music
- ♪ performance opportunities at termly concerts
- ♪ groups from young beginners to seasoned instrumentalists
- ♪ teamwork
- ♪ reinforce learning from individual lessons
- ♪ develop musical connections
- ♪ two week try out
- ♪ warm welcome

SATURDAY MUSIC GROUPS AND ENSEMBLES

Junior Music Group

9.00-9.40am

Ages 4-7 for beginners

String Group

9.45-10.45am

Anyone able to play 5 notes or more

Senior Wind Band

9.50-10.50am

Any wind and brass instrument
grade 4 and above

Orchestra

11.00-12.00 midday

Any instrument

On-line Theory Group

(book through Hertford Music Centre)

9.00-9.40am

Grade 3/4 and able to work independently

FRIDAY MUSIC GROUPS AND ENSEMBLES

Junior Brass Ensemble

4.30-5.10pm

Anyone able to play 5 notes or
more on a
brass instrument

Training Band

5.30-6.30pm

Anyone able to play 5 notes
or more on any instrument

Ensemble sign up



Each ensemble fee is £59.00 per term or, if you join more than one ensemble, consider the HMS Ensemble Membership for £109 per term to join and participate in more HMS ensembles for no extra cost; T&C's apply as per website

To register on line please visit <https://ukhertfordshire.speedadmin.dk/registration#/>
or scan the Ensemble sign up QR code above
For further information please e-mail
bstortfordmusicenquiries@hertfordshire.gov.uk
or call 01992 556 752 (term time only)

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Hertfordshire Music Service

hertsmusicservice.org.uk





What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

SNAPCHAT

AGE RESTRICTION
13+



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Snapchat is an instant messaging app which allows users to send images, videos and texts to people in their friends list. One of Snapchat's unique features is that pictures and messages 'disappear' 24 hours after they've been viewed; however, this content isn't as temporary as many believe – with some users saving screenshots or using another device to take a photo of their screen. This year, Snapchat added 'My AI': a customisable chatbot with which people can chat and share secrets, as well as asking for advice and suggestions of places to visit.

CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

Even if your child only connects with people they know, they may still get friend requests from strangers. The Quick Add option lets users befriend people the app recommends – but these 'friends' are merely a username, which could have anyone behind it. Accepting such requests reveals children's personal information through the Story, SnapMap and Spotlight features, potentially putting them at risk from predators.

EXCESSIVE USE

Snapchat works hard on user engagement, with features like streaks (messaging the same person every day to build up a high score). Spotlight Challenges tempt users into spending time producing content in search of cash prizes and online fame, while it's easy for children to pass hours watching Spotlight's endless scroll of videos.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some videos and posts on Snapchat aren't suitable for children. The hashtags used to group content are determined by the poster, so even an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's 'disappearing messages' feature also makes it easy for young people (teens in particular) to share explicit images on impulse – so sexting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

My AI is Snapchat's new chatbot, which replies to questions in a human-like manner. However, the software is still in its infancy and has significant drawbacks, such as biased, incorrect or misleading responses. There have already been numerous reports of young users turning to AI for medical help and diagnoses, which could be inaccurate and therefore potentially dangerous.

ONLINE PRESSURES

Although many of Snapchat's filters are designed to entertain or amuse, the 'beautify' effects on photos can set unrealistic body-image expectations – creating feelings of inadequacy if a young person compares themselves unfavourably with other users. Snapchat now also has 'priority' notifications (which still get displayed even if a device is in 'do not disturb' mode), increasing the pressure on users to log back in and interact.

VISIBLE LOCATION

Snap Map highlights a device's exact position on a virtual map which is visible to other users. There are options to restrict who can see this information: all friends, only you (Ghost Mode) or selected friends. Snapchat also has real-time location sharing, which is intended as a buddy system to ensure friends have reached home safely – but which could also be used to track a young person for more sinister reasons.

Advice for Parents & Carers

TURN OFF QUICK ADD

The Quick Add feature helps people find each other on the app. This function works based on mutual friends or whether someone's number is in your child's contacts list. Explain to your child that this could potentially make their profile visible to strangers. We recommend that your child turns off Quick Add, which can be done in the settings (accessed via the cog icon).

CHOOSE GOOD CONNECTIONS

In 2021, Snapchat rolled out a new safety feature: users can now receive notifications reminding them of the importance of maintaining connections with people they actually know well, as opposed to strangers. This 'Friend Check Up' encourages users to delete connections with users that they rarely communicate with, to maintain their online safety and privacy.

DISCUSS AI

Although My AI's responses can often give the impression that it's a real person, it's essential that young people remember this certainly isn't the case. Encourage your child to think critically about My AI's replies to their questions: are they accurate and reliable? Remind them that My AI shouldn't replace chatting with their real friends, and that it's always better to talk to an actual person in relation to medical matters.

CHAT ABOUT CONTENT

It may feel like an awkward conversation (and one that young people can be reluctant to have) but it's important to talk openly and non-judgementally about sexting. Remind your child that once something's online, the creator loses control over where it ends up – and who else sees it. Likewise, it's vital that children understand that some challenges which become popular on the platform may have potentially harmful consequences.

KEEP ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Profiles are private by default, but children may make them public to gain more followers. Snap Stories are visible to everyone your child adds, unless they change the settings. On SnapMaps, their location is visible unless Ghost Mode is enabled (again via settings). It's safest not to add people your child doesn't know in real life – especially since the addition of My Places, which allows other Snapchat users to see where your child regularly visits and checks in.

BE READY TO BLOCK AND REPORT

If a stranger does connect with your child on Snapchat and begins to make them feel uncomfortable through bullying, pressure to send explicit images or by sending sexual images to them, your child can select the three dots on that person's profile and report or block them. There are options to state why they're reporting that user (annoying or malicious messages, spam, or masquerading as someone else, for example).

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



NOS National Online Safety®
#WakeUpWednesday

Sources: <https://help.snapchat.com/en-gb/article/1266788358932-What-is-My-AI-on-Snapchat-and-how-do-I-use-it> | <https://www.snap.com/en-gb/learn/teaching-children-how-to-use-snapchat-safely> | <https://www.snap.com/en-gb/learn/teaching-children-how-to-use-snapchat-safely> | <https://www.snap.com/en-gb/learn/teaching-children-how-to-use-snapchat-safely>



LOVE-RESPECT-FLOURISH

#DedicatedtoExcellence

SCHOOLS MEDIA COMPETITION 2024

Columban Missionaries invite students aged 13-18 to submit an original piece of writing or image on the theme:

Biodiversity Matters

Explore Biodiversity, which humanity relies on for health, food and well-being.

DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS SATURDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2024

For entry details:
www.columbancompetition.com

WRITTEN PRIZES
• 1ST £500
• 2ND £250
• 3RD £150

IMAGE PRIZES
• 1ST £500
• 2ND £250
• 3RD £150

 **COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES BRITAIN**



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<https://www.stmarys.net/vacancies>



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Autism . ADHD . Dyslexia . Dyspraxia . Tourettes . Dyscalculia



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PLACE: St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School

DATE: Wednesday 14th February 2024

TIME: from 9am

