

# ROBERT CLACK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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## **Welcome to the Robert Clack Alumni Association newsletter**

Welcome to our 45<sup>th</sup> Robert Clack Alumni Association newsletter - and our final one of 2025. In this newsletter we reflect back on a busy autumn term for our students, past and present. Our alumni have been back in school regularly throughout the term, offering incredible work experience opportunities and advice and support across a range of careers including technology, construction, advertising, finance, energy, transport, engineering, and public service. We also report back on another excellent year of GCSE and A Level results, our amazing student trip to China, and kicking the festive season off in style with the annual Christmas concert.

Wishing all our alumni and supporters a very happy Christmas and a healthy, prosperous new year.

## **Robert Clack School celebrates exceptional GCSE success**

We are delighted to share that students at Robert Clack have delivered the school's strongest-ever GCSE results, with improvement across every key performance measure—despite national outcomes falling for the fourth consecutive year.

Robert Clack's results are significantly above national averages. An impressive 76.4% of all entries achieved grade 4 or above (compared with the national figure of 67.4% and the London average of 71.6%), while 25.8% of entries were awarded grade 7 or higher (exceeding the national average of 23%). These achievements are particularly noteworthy given that Robert Clack is the largest comprehensive school in the country, with 480 Year 11 students sitting GCSE examinations.

In total, 21 pupils earned grades 7 to 9 in every subject they studied, and we are especially proud of two students who achieved an exceptional eight grade 9s. Additionally, more than a third of pupils secured grades 5 to 9 across all their subjects. Three-quarters attained at least a grade 4 in both English and Maths, and over half of the cohort achieved grade 5 or above in these core subjects.

Russell Taylor, Executive Headteacher, said: "As national results continue their downward adjustment to pre-Covid levels, I am thrilled that, at Robert Clack, we have sustained year-on-year improvement, and with our largest-ever cohort of 480 students. I would like to wish our students the very best of luck for the next stage of their education in our outstanding sixth form. I also want to express my gratitude to our staff, governors and parents for their unwavering dedication to our children."

Robert Clack continues its success with outstanding A Level results. Robert Clack students have once again excelled, achieving impressive outcomes in A Level, Vocational, and Tech Level qualifications. As a result, around 140 students are set to begin university courses this September.

A large number of students will be progressing to universities across the country to study a diverse range of degree subjects, including aeronautics and astronautics, biochemistry, computer science, economics, engineering, history, physics, and psychology.

We are particularly delighted that three students have secured places to study medicine, two have earned places in dentistry, and ten have been accepted to study law.

## **Robert Clack School celebrates exceptional GCSE success (cont.)**

Many students have also gained places at prestigious Russell Group universities, with a significant number choosing leading London institutions such as Imperial College, King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, and LSE. We are equally pleased to see students heading to renowned universities further afield, including Warwick, Durham, Nottingham, Southampton, and Birmingham.

Several students opted to pursue highly competitive degree apprenticeships and have been offered placements with organisations such as TFL and top construction and insurance firms. In A Level qualification, students achieved an average grade of B-. Notably, twenty students (26%) attained the 'gold standard' of AAB or higher, and ten students achieved grades equivalent to AAA or above.

For Vocational and Tech Level qualifications, the average result was a Distinction. Fifteen students (27%) were awarded grades equivalent to Distinction-Distinction-Distinction or higher, and one student achieved the exceptional level of Distinction\*-Distinction\*-Distinction\*.

These results are a major milestone for Robert Clack students and set them on course for bright futures full of opportunities. Well done to all.

## **An unforgettable adventure: Robert Clack's first-ever trip to China**

On 19 July, 58 excited students and staff set off on an extraordinary journey—the school's first trip to China.

After a long flight, tired faces were quickly replaced with smiles of anticipation as we landed in Beijing. From there, we travelled to Tianjin, our home for the week, where we settled into the warm and welcoming campus of Tianjin Normal University. Our first day was spent exploring the university grounds and getting familiar with our surroundings—a perfect beginning to an unforgettable adventure.

Over the following six days, students immersed themselves in Chinese culture, language, and traditions alongside new friends from China and the United States. Each day brought a rich mix of learning and exploration, and the enthusiasm, curiosity, and energy from everyone involved were truly inspiring.

### **Highlights of the trip included:**

- Martial arts training
- A visit to the National Maritime Museum of China
- Creative Chinese art workshops
- A trip to the picturesque town of Yangliuqing
- Vibrant traditional dragon dancing
- Exploring China Stone Park, where students experienced local crafts, flavours, and history

## China trip (cont.)

Students also visited some of China's most iconic landmarks, including the majestic Temple of Heaven and the world-famous Tiananmen Square.

This inspiring experience was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for both students and staff. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who helped raise funds or donated to make this memorable journey possible. It will remain etched in our students' memories forever.

A heartfelt thank-you to our PTA and all our alumni whose generosity made this trip a reality. The school and our students are deeply appreciative of your support.

## Achieve Excellence Careers Day inspires Year 11 students

On Thursday 4 December, Robert Clack School held its second Achieve Excellence Careers Day—a valuable event designed to motivate and support our Year 11 students as they begin thinking about their future pathways. The day brought together alumni from a wide range of professions, each sharing their personal journeys and insights, leaving a meaningful impact on our students.

Workshops were held across all three school sites, giving pupils the chance to hear directly from former students and ask questions about their experiences.

## Student Reflections

Students expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to meet former Robert Clack pupils who have gone on to pursue a variety of career routes. One student commented: "That was really good. I still don't know exactly what I want to do, but I now have a better idea of what's out there."

Another shared: "It was a helpful experience because we could hear someone's personal story from when they were in our position at school. It helped me understand what to expect from an apprenticeship and what the journey might look like. It was encouraging to hear from people who started out at Robert Clack."

A third added: "I found it very helpful, as everyone there had followed the same path I aspire to. Hearing their personal stories and challenges made it much easier to relate."



## Achieve Excellence Careers Day (cont.)

### Alumni insights

The event also brought alumni back to the school, allowing them to share their career journeys and inspire the students who are following in their footsteps.

Yasin Weyli, trainee Technical Coordinator at Hill Group Construction: "It was a great experience, and I am glad to have been able to give something back to the students of Robert Clack."

Ali Durowoju, apprentice account handler: "Really good day yesterday, overall, very good experience."

Elijah DaSilva Kyriacou, apprentice at Mulalley Construction, "Thank you for the invitation and the opportunity, it was a productive day for the selected students."

Sarah Haxell, apprentice quantity surveyor: "The day was really great actually, all of the students were really engaged and asked a lot of questions about what I do and how I got there. Even the ones that weren't really interested in construction, still asked me questions about apprenticeships."

Bradley Stokes from Amazon, "It's always a pleasure and very insightful! I enjoy sharing my experience and route into my career because it shows there are other paths, and anyone can do it. Small changes now could go a long way, and I think it's nice for them to hear a realistic approach rather than the usual criteria."

Jack Cooper, apprentice at Hill Group Construction, "Thanks for giving me the opportunity to talk with the younger students about opportunities and pathways for the future. It was a great chance for me and the other helpers to give them an honest insight as to what the process is really like."

Final words from Stagecoach Engineering Director, Mark Wallis, "It was a real pleasure to return to Robert Clack School, especially alongside one of their former students, Ellis Moore, who is now thriving as an engineering apprentice with us at Stagecoach London. We encouraged the students to keep an open mind about their future and reminded them that apprenticeships can offer exciting, hands-on pathways into long-term careers. I hope to return to the school again early next year with an electric bus, so that my team and I can talk to students again and give them an even closer look at the work that goes on behind the scenes to keep the capital's public transport moving."

This event demonstrates our ongoing commitment to providing students with the guidance and inspiration they need to achieve excellence. Notably, three Year 11 students who attended last year's Careers Day have since secured engineering apprenticeships with the Stagecoach bus group—an achievement that highlights just how life-changing these opportunities can be.

## **Achieve Excellence Careers Day (cont.)**

We look forward to building on this success and continuing to offer experiences that support our pupils in exploring their ambitions.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this day truly memorable!

## **Work experience highlights**

In the sunny month of July, two of our Year 12 students completed a fantastic work-experience placement with Bauer Media Group, an opportunity made possible through the continued support of alumnus Jamie Mason, a long-standing supporter of the school.

Jamie and his colleague Jordan Smith were extremely impressed with how both students conducted themselves throughout the week.

"It was a joy to have both students with us. They were punctual, polite, and appropriately dressed for the workplace. They picked up tasks quickly, asked thoughtful questions, and showed genuine curiosity about the working environment. They engaged confidently with colleagues across the office and expressed real appreciation for their experience."

One student even delivered a presentation summarising her learning from the week—an impressive piece of work she chose to complete independently. She went on to post about her experience on LinkedIn, demonstrating both confidence and professionalism.

"We're incredibly proud of how they represented themselves, a true testament to the values instilled at Robert Clack. Your alumni network and partners like BFS are doing vital work in opening pathways and raising awareness of careers in our industry. If either student pursued a future in this sector, our industry would be fortunate to have them."

Bauer also welcomed feedback to continue improving their placements and expressed their gratitude for the ongoing partnership with the school.

## **Student reflection**

One student shared an especially enthusiastic review of her time at Bauer: "Have you ever had a week that completely changed your view of an industry? That was me, from July 7-11, living my best media life at Bauer Outdoor Media."



## Work experience highlights (cont.)

I first discovered Bauer on a school trip with the Business Academy, and I was blown away. After following up on LinkedIn, I somehow landed the chance to spend a week rotating through departments—learning Salesforce with Flynn and Klaudia, exploring client relationships with Natalie, diving into marketing with Charley, mastering VLOOKUPs, and even exploring programmatic ads with Eddie.

We toured competitor sites, pitched ideas, joined team meetings, and sharpened our CVs. Every day brought something new, and every person I met made the experience more inspiring.

Huge thanks to everyone, especially Jamie, who believed in me and made this opportunity possible. For one unforgettable week, I felt like part of the Bauer family. This experience? 10/10. Would recommend."



## Shell work experience success

Another successful placement took place at Shell, generously arranged by alumnus Gary Cohen. Feedback from our students was equally positive:

"My experience at Shell was really fun. It gave me great insight into the corporate world and showed me it wasn't nearly as serious or miserable as I imagined! Everyone was enthusiastic and clearly loved what they did. The highlight for me was touring the IBM office—and we even saw Lewis Hamilton, who happened to be visiting at the same time. Overall, it was a truly enjoyable and eye-opening experience."



A huge thank-you to all alumni, partners, and staff who make these opportunities possible.

You are providing our students with transformative, life-changing experiences—and truly inspiring the next generation.

## Three Year 11 students secure apprenticeships with Stagecoach Bus Group

We are delighted to share that three of our former Year 11 students have officially secured apprenticeships with Stagecoach Bus Group!

In March, students across all three sites were given a unique opportunity to explore exciting careers in both engineering and driving, thanks to a visit from Stagecoach arranged through our alumni network. Stagecoach representatives arrived with a brand-new bus and delivered engaging presentations to our Year 11 cohort. Among the speakers was former student Callum Ferris, who left Robert Clack in 2019 and is now thriving as a Stagecoach apprentice—an inspiring example for our current students.

Engineering specialists spoke about the wide range of opportunities within the sector, including the growing demand for hybrid and electric vehicle expertise. Driving professionals shared insights into the qualifications and skills required to become a bus driver, while the recruitment team introduced Stagecoach's apprenticeship programme and explained the selection process.

During the visit three Year 11 students, Charlie S, Ellis M, and Dilpreet S, expressed a strong interest in the engineering pathway. After successfully completing the interview and assessment stages, the students faced the final hurdle: waiting for their GCSE results. Upon receiving them, all three were officially enrolled onto the apprenticeship programme, where they continue to progress and flourish.

This achievement highlights the remarkable impact of partnerships between local businesses and our alumni community. When these networks work together, they create real opportunities that can shape the futures of our young people.

Our collaboration with Stagecoach continues to strengthen, and we look forward to seeing more students follow in the footsteps of Callum, Charlie, Ellis and Dilpreet. We wish them every success in their careers and hope they will return to school in the future to inspire the next generation.





## **Alumnus Jamie Coughlan speaks to Year 11 student about the realities of firefighting**

After Year 11 student Jack R expressed an interest in becoming a firefighter, our Development Officer, Ellen Monk, immediately searched our alumni network to find someone who could offer guidance on the best route into the profession.

Jamie Coughlan, who has been a firefighter for 15 years, was delighted to speak with Jack about his journey into the service, what day-to-day life as a firefighter looks like, and the skills and fitness levels needed to meet the entry requirements.

On Tuesday 8 December, Jamie and Jack met via Teams to discuss what Jamie described as "one of the best jobs in the world." Jamie spoke passionately about his career, explaining how much he enjoys the variety and challenge of the role—no two days are ever the same. He shared that he knew from a young age that he didn't want an office job; he wanted something exciting, community-focused, and rewarding.

Jamie also talked honestly about the emotional demands of the job, as well as the pride and fulfilment that comes with saving lives. He encouraged Jack to focus on his education, noting that strong GCSE grades make the entry process easier.

He also stressed the importance of physical fitness and even offered to design a strength-building programme to help Jack prepare for the physical assessments. He reminded Jack that it's okay to make mistakes—no one gets everything right the first time. The important thing is to acknowledge them and learn from them.

Jack came prepared with thoughtful questions, including whether having another skill, such as mechanics, would be useful. Jamie explained that this is an excellent idea, as many firefighters take on second jobs due to shift patterns, and mechanical skills can be particularly valuable within the service.

Jamie has generously offered to meet with Jack again in three months, and there may also be an opportunity for Jack and his family to visit the fire station.

Thank you so much, Jamie. You are truly an inspiring role model for our students.



## **Former student inspires Year 12 with insight into management consultancy**

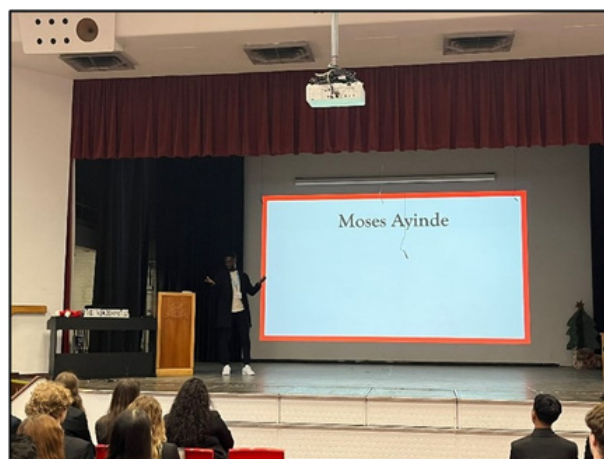
We were delighted to welcome back Moses Ayinde, a former Robert Clack student who left Sixth Form in 2012 and has since built an impressive career in management consultancy. After completing a degree in biology at the University of Nottingham, Moses entered the consultancy world and is now a self-employed independent consultant.

During his visit, Moses spoke to Year 12 about what a management consultant does and why he is passionate about helping young people, particularly those from boroughs like Barking and Dagenham, break through barriers and access careers in the sector. And where better to begin this mission than at his old school?

Moses explained that his new initiative is aimed at students who sit in the academic middle—those who want to push themselves further and aim higher. Year 12 students were invited to apply for a competitive programme, and the successful candidates will have the opportunity to work directly with Moses in the coming months.

We are extremely grateful to Moses for approaching us and generously giving his time, experience, and insight.

We look forward to seeing how this exciting partnership develops!



## **Year 11 student takes flight with aeronautical engineering inspiration**

One of our Year 11 students, Titas, recently shared a strong interest in aeronautical engineering during a conversation with his mentor, Mrs Webster. She immediately contacted alumni Development Officer, Ellen Monk to see whether we had any alumni who could speak with Titas about the field, the nature of the role, and the pathways required to pursue a future career in this area. Ellen quickly identified a suitable former student and was pleased to arrange a Microsoft Teams call with Kingsley, who is currently studying aeronautical engineering at Loughborough University.

The meeting took place on Friday 5 December, with Titas arriving well-prepared and full of questions.

## Aeronautical engineering inspiration (cont.)

Throughout their discussion, they explored opportunities within the industry and looked at the best ways to develop a strong portfolio—one that could give aspiring engineers a real competitive edge when applying for courses or apprenticeships. Kingsley was extremely impressed by Titas's initiative, remarking that, "it's amazing and rare for a Year 11 student to go above and beyond like this." We are incredibly proud to support such enthusiasm and ambition, and we look forward to seeing where this inspiration leads Titas next!

Thank you so much to Kingsley for responding so quickly and taking the time to speak to Titas.



## Former student returns to inspire Year 9 at Gosfield

On Wednesday 19 November, we were delighted to welcome back former student Luqmaan Said, who returned to speak to our Year 9 cohort about the importance of making thoughtful and flexible Options choices.

Luqmaan left Robert Clack in 2019 before studying economics at Queen Mary University of London. He shared honestly with students that, in Year 9, he had originally planned to pursue engineering. It wasn't until Year 12 that he discovered a passion for Economics—an interest that ultimately reshaped both his academic journey and his future career direction.

Luqmaan now works as an insolvency administrator, a licensed professional who helps manage the affairs of financially distressed companies. His role includes attempting to rescue struggling businesses where possible, or, when that isn't achievable, securing the best outcome for creditors compared with liquidation.

Throughout his talk, Luqmaan highlighted the importance of curiosity and being open to new opportunities. He reminded students that career paths often evolve from unexpected interests, and that learning continues long after school or university.



## Former student returns to inspire Year 9 at Gosfield (cont.)

His message was clear and inspiring: keep learning, stay adaptable, and follow your passions.

We extend a heartfelt thank-you to Lugmaan for taking the time to speak with and guide our Year 9 students at such a pivotal stage in their school journey



## From Classroom to career: Fisayo shares a first-hand look at investment banking

On Friday 26 September, alumni Development Officer Ellen Monk arranged a Zoom meeting for Year 12 student, Nelly and former Robert Clack student Fisayo, who previously worked in Investment Banking, after Nelly expressed an interest in the sector.

Fisayo began by sharing her journey from completing her A Levels to studying at university—at a time when degree apprenticeships were not yet available.

She spoke openly about the highs and lows of university life, including the uncertainty she faced during her final year, and how she ultimately discovered her passion for finance. She also highlighted why today's degree apprenticeships offer such valuable opportunities, combining academic study with real-world experience.

Fisayo then walked Nelly through "a day in the life" of an Investment Banker, providing a clear picture of what the role truly involves beyond the job title. She also emphasised the importance of effective networking in both launching and sustaining a career in the industry, encouraging students to take advantage of every opportunity to connect, learn and grow.

Another great example of our alumni community supporting current students as they explore the right career paths. A big thank you to Fisayo for offering Nelly such valuable, first-hand insight into the investment banking industry.



## **Festive cheer fills the hall at the annual Christmas Concert**

On Wednesday 3 December, the Robert Clack Music Department held its much-anticipated annual Christmas Concert at the Gosfield Road site.

Students from all three sites came together to showcase their musical talents in front of a packed audience of family, friends, governors, alumni, and staff, all eager to support this special event.

The evening opened with our charismatic comperes, Jake and Shane, who delivered a hilarious duet dedicated to Dr Spandl, Head of the Lymington site, and Mr Taylor, our Executive Headteacher. Their catchy rap to Ariana Grande's festive classic, Santa Tell Me, complete with witty, personalised lyrics, set the tone perfectly and instantly lifted the Christmas spirit in the room.

The school orchestra followed with a delightful medley featuring White Christmas and the iconic Mission Impossible theme. The first half also included an array of impressive solos, duets, trios, and ensemble pieces, highlighting students' vocal abilities as well as performances on a range of musical instruments.

Particular highlights included Year 11 student Oliver R's confident rendition of Upside Down from the film Curious George, and the school's fabulous Samba Band, who closed the first half with an energetic, crowd-pleasing finale.

After a short interval, the second half continued the festive magic. The orchestra and string group returned with more seasonal favourites, alongside further solo and group performances. A standout moment came from Year 11 student Andreja K, whose captivating version of Mary, Did You Know? held the entire hall in absolute silence. Her stunning vocals created one of the most memorable moments of the night.

As always, the concert was a joy to attend. The excitement of the students, the pride of families and friends, and the support from staff and volunteers created a warm, uplifting community atmosphere. Even the occasional technical hiccup only served to strengthen the wonderful sense of togetherness that defines the Robert Clack spirit.

The evening concluded with heartfelt speeches from Head of Music, Mrs Nicole Chapman, who thanked performers, the audience, and the many behind-the-scenes helpers who ensured the show ran smoothly.



**Christmas concert (cont.)**

Mr Taylor then shared his admiration for the exceptional standard of the entire concert, acknowledging the hard work of the music department and all those involved. He also gave a special mention to comperes Jake and Shane, whose humour, hats, and earrings kept everyone entertained throughout and he even requested a copy of their rap for a potential performance with Dr Spandl at the staff Christmas party!

A final, joyful sing-along to Jingle Bell Rock had the whole hall on their feet, bringing the evening to a truly festive close. Special thanks go to our wonderful alumni, who generously gave their time during such a busy season to join in the celebrations. Their presence brought back fond memories of their own performances on the very same stage.

Thank you to Lewis Holmes, Stephen Halsey, Dr Perena Wasterfall, Isabel Myler, Nikkita Cleave and family, and Teri Webster and granddaughter Brooke.

We hope to see you all again at the next concert.

**Spotlight On..... Anish Vara  
(Class of 2020)**

**Anish Vara, Assistant Underwriter for  
Intact Insurance**

**Working Life:**

I'm currently an insurance underwriter—a role that blends elements of finance, geography, and sales. After leaving school, I began a degree apprenticeship in accounting, but after two years I realised it wasn't the right path for me. I decided to make the switch to insurance at a company where I had previously completed work experience.

For a long time, I assumed accounting would be my career, but thankfully that early work experience helped me see the range of opportunities out there.

**School Day memories:**

I attended Robert Clack from 2013 to 2020, including Sixth Form. Some of my favourite memories include playing cage football at lunchtime, navigating the one-way system on the lower site, grabbing Radnor fizzy drinks, and unfortunately racking up plenty of detentions!

School trips were always entertaining; something funny always seemed to happen. Watching my friends get chased by bulls during a Duke of Edinburgh expedition is still one of the funniest things I've seen. PE was one of my favourite lessons each week, even if it meant ending up in a muddy puddle after a rugby tackle.

**Spotlight on... (cont.)**

I genuinely wouldn't change a thing about my school experience—it played a huge part in shaping who I am today.

**How do you think school has changed since your time there?**

There seems to be a much bigger focus on online work now—I wouldn't get away with the old, "I lost my homework" excuse anymore!

There are more opportunities available for students today, but with larger year groups, there's also more competition. So overall, I'm not sure things are any easier.

**Advice for students today:**

Get involved in extracurricular activities outside of school. They help you stand out from other candidates and show you have interests beyond academics. They're also great conversation starters.

Most importantly, enjoy seeing your friends every day—adult life has a habit of getting in the way of that.

And final words from Anish are, live each day to the fullest, because one day you'll wish you could go back to being school age again.

Thank you so much, Anish, for sharing your school memories and for taking the time to be 'Under the Spotlight'!

**Breakfast event for a fantastic charity - Williams Syndrome**

On Wednesday 17 December, Mrs J Rose, Head of Beauty at Robert Clack, together with colleagues from the Beauty Department, hosted a truly special charity breakfast in support of the Williams Syndrome Foundation. Williams Syndrome is a rare genetic condition, and the foundation works tirelessly to support families, promote wellbeing, and fund vital research. The event brought staff together for a wonderful cause and a lovely start to the day.

Staff were treated to a generous and delicious breakfast spread, kindly donated by school colleagues, who showcased their impressive baking talents.

**Charity breakfast event (cont.)**

With unlimited tea, coffee, and juice on offer, it created the perfect opportunity for staff to relax, connect, and enjoy each other's company before the school day began.

The festive spirit was in full swing as it was Christmas jumper day too, with Santa even making a special appearance to spread some extra cheer. Mrs Rose was truly overwhelmed by the generosity shown, from the amount of homemade treats to the many colleagues who came along to support the event.

Leftover items were sold at breaktime, bringing the total amount raised to £521.38.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who donated, baked, attended, and supported this wonderful charity — your kindness and generosity made the event a great success.



**WISHING YOU ALL A  
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A  
HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**LOOK OUT FOR OUR NEXT  
NEWSLETTER IN 2026**



**Find out more about our work**

If you would like to find out more about events to support the school that you can take part in, or want to tell us what you've been up to since leaving school, please drop Ellen Monk a line

([emonk@robertclack.co.uk](mailto:emonk@robertclack.co.uk)).

There's always something going on and always opportunities for you to get involved. We'd love to hear from you and welcome you back to school!

**Support our work**

Join us Sign up to the Alumni Association at:  
<https://networks.futurefirst.org.uk/register/robertclack>

**Volunteer** Come back to school as part of one of the many exciting events we run with current pupils throughout the year. Contact [emonk@robertclack.co.uk](mailto:emonk@robertclack.co.uk)

**Donate** Alumni can make a real difference to current pupils' lives. You can donate at [www.justgiving.com/rcdt](http://www.justgiving.com/rcdt) by texting RCDT08 to 70070 or contacting [emonk@robertclack.co.uk](mailto:emonk@robertclack.co.uk)