

ROBERT CLACK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the Robert Clack Alumni Association newsletter

Welcome the 46th edition of our Robert Clack Alumni Association newsletter. In this edition we bring you the results of our fantastic Entrepreneur Academy 2025/26, with another host of incredible and creative student business ideas (supported by our brilliant alumni, of course). Alumni have been back in school, in-person and virtually, inspiring our students with careers advice in the field of medicine, business and finance, construction, social work, psychology, and photography, and our networks have also facilitated valuable visits from Black Rock investment company and a student trip to Bauer Media.

We bring updates from our successful and growing partnership with Stagecoach Bus Group, including visits from their experienced staff and former student, now year 1 apprentice, who was inspired to join the company through a similar event just last year! We've also got news from our less recent alumni - a reunion of classes of 1969-1972, and our class of 1981 Clacker who is 'in the spotlight' in this edition.

Robert Clack Alumni Entrepreneur Academy: Showcasing the Next Generation of Talent and Innovation

Robert Clack's aspiring entrepreneurs were excited to take part in this year's Entrepreneur Academy — an inspiring initiative first launched by the Development Trust Trustees in 2017. Created to help students unlock and develop their entrepreneurial talents, the programme is proudly supported by the school's Business Department alongside successful alumni who return to share their real-world expertise.

This year's challenge, set by the Business Department, invited students to design a product or service aimed at 16-21-year-olds. The brief offered creative freedom: entries could target male, female, or mixed audiences and could be either a brand-new invention or an innovative twist on an existing idea. While no fixed budget was provided, students were required to carefully research and document their projected costs. Importantly, each concept needed to be relevant to young people preparing for or currently attending college or university.

Drawing on their experience, alumni mentors delivered a dynamic series of workshops designed to give students a solid foundation in business. From sparking innovative ideas to understanding product development, these sessions equipped participants with the practical skills and confidence needed to build profitable, sustainable ventures of their own.

Award-winning business coach and regular supporter of the Entrepreneur Academy, **Tina Dulieu**, (class of 1975), spoke to the students about evaluating their business ideas, the tools they need to start a business, and how to make it successful.

Anish Vara (class of 2020) shared his career journey from running a trainer sourcing business to becoming an underwriter for RSA.

Through alumni **Jamie Mason**, students were also provided with an exciting opportunity earlier in the year, to visit the offices of Bauer Media. **Jordan Smith** alongside his colleague **Holly Williams** shared the key ingredient of effective advertisement and how impactful ideas are carefully crafted from the initial spark of a creative idea through to the final execution.

After these sessions, the students were divided into eight teams to develop their own business ideas. Once they had brainstormed, designed their concepts, and researched the associated costs, they presented their products to a judging panel comprised of alumni and staff members. The panel included Tina Dulieu, Anish Vara, former student and Head of Sixth Form Farren Joseph, and Alumni Development Officer Ellen Monk.

The atmosphere was filled with both excitement and nervous anticipation as each group stepped forward to present their final product. Weeks of hard work and research had all led to this pivotal moment.

Entrepreneur Academy (cont.)

First up was **Imperium** presenting their banking app, "Your Money, Your Control." The team delivered a confident and well-prepared presentation, clearly demonstrating a strong understanding of their product and the research behind each category. They also created a short promotional video for their app, which was both engaging and entertaining. The team responded to the judges' questions with confidence and concluded by handing out business cards to the panel.

Next were **Experienced Excellers** presenting their idea "Opening Doors to Future Careers." Their app aims to help students find niche work experience opportunities. The team delivered a strong presentation and promoted their business through both a video and a website. They answered the judges' questions confidently and finished by handing out business cards.

Unipath: "Figuring Out Life After A Levels!" Their app is designed to support students with applications for university and apprenticeships. The app was simple and easy to use, and the team had even created their own QR code that directed users straight to their Instagram page. It was a well-delivered presentation with effective promotion of their business.

Study and Steer offer specialised driving lessons for 16-21-year-olds, with the added benefit of one-to-one coaching to help them prepare for their theory test. Through the app, students can also choose their own instructor. The team delivered a strong presentation that was clearly well researched.

Nexa Youth: "What's Next for You!" Their platform supports students in creating CVs and sharing them with relevant employers. The team delivered a strong presentation and had developed a very informative website, along with a short promotional video.

They had clearly invested a great deal of effort into their business, taking on board advice from their visit to Bauer Media. They concluded their pitch by handing out business cards to the judges.

RM Hydra presented a smart, reusable water bottle that can be customised, with the ability to set the time and temperature through an app. It was a relevant product that was both well researched and clearly presented.

Project Choremate: "Turning Everyday Chores into Fun Activities!" This app turns everyday chores into challenges that you can complete and compete in with friends. Users earn points based on the chores they complete, helping to motivate them to stay on top of tasks and even beat their friends. The idea was confidently presented and stood out as both relevant and creative.

The final presentation was **Magnivision** featuring rechargeable smart glasses. The product includes built-in cameras that allow the focus to be adjusted to match the user's eye prescription. The data collected is processed through AI, which automatically changes the lens focus. This remarkable innovation could mean that users would never need to buy a new pair of glasses again. It was a fascinating and confidently delivered presentation, highlighting how AI is transforming the world we live in.

Once all the teams had delivered their presentations, the panel — together with Business Studies teacher Zara Azad — faced a challenging decision. After an in-depth discussion, the judges unanimously agreed that Imperium should be awarded first place, with Magnivision finishing as a very close runner-up. Every presentation and product left a strong impression on the judges. The standard was exceptional, with innovative ideas that thoughtfully addressed every aspect of the brief. The future of entrepreneurship is undoubtedly bright.

Entrepreneur Academy (cont.)

A sincere thank you to everyone involved in this year's Entrepreneur Academy — our dedicated teachers and students, the alumni and volunteers who supported the workshops, and the panel of judges for giving their time and invaluable feedback. This event would not be possible without your continued support.

The Entrepreneur Academy continues to grow and improve each year, and we are already excited to see what next year's participants will bring.



Exploring Careers at Stagecoach London: A Valuable Insight for Local Students

On Thursday 12th March, students from Gosfield, Green Lane, and Lymington sites enjoyed an opportunity to explore careers in engineering and bus driving during a special visit from professionals at Stagecoach Bus Group.

Engineering Manager Stuart Jackson, Delegated Driving Examiner Daniel Nevill, Recruitment representative Becky Stevens, and former student and current year 1 apprentice Ellis Moore, delivered an engaging presentation, sharing their experiences and offering a valuable insight into the wide range of opportunities within the transport industry. The session gave students a first-hand look at potential career pathways while highlighting the skills and dedication involved in keeping London's buses running smoothly.

Following Stagecoach Group's visit to the school last year, three Year 11 students applied for the company's engineering apprenticeship programme, and all successfully secured places, including Ellis.

Ellis spoke to students about his experience so far as a Mechelec apprentice and his college placement in Wolverhampton. He said that he is enjoying his role as an apprentice engineer and reflected on how good it felt to now be sharing his journey with students, having been one of those attending the same visit just a year ago.

Stuart Jackson, Technical Manager at Stagecoach, also shared his own career journey in the industry and highlighted the wide range of opportunities available within engineering. He provided valuable technical insight into electric vehicles and demonstrated the electric bus system located at the rear of the vehicle.

Careers at Stagecoach (cont.)

In addition, he discussed the work involved in converting the bus so that it could accommodate bicycles, making it compliant for use in the new Silvertown Tunnel.

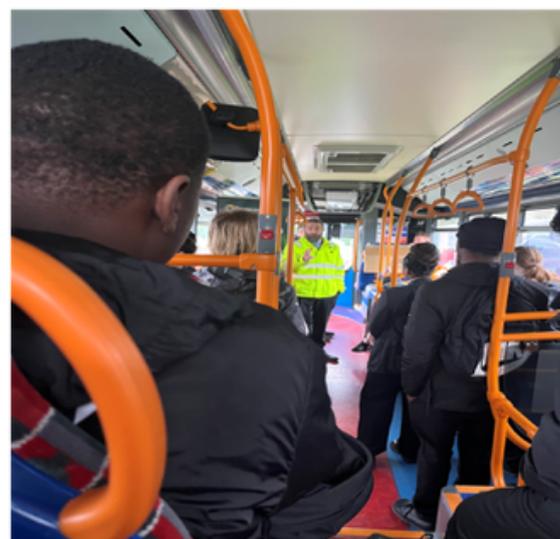
Delegated Driving Examiner Dan Neville spoke about his own career path, having started as a bus driver, and described the driving profession at Stagecoach. He provided students with an in-depth overview of the qualifications and skills required to become a professional driver.

Becky Stevens provided valuable information about Stagecoach's recruitment process and the requirements needed to apply. She also explained the differences between the Mechelec and Coachmaker apprenticeships, outlining the responsibilities and skills associated with each role.

Year 11 student Abdur said, *"The visit was highly informative and highlighted potential career pathways available after secondary school. He explained that it provided a valuable insight into what life might be like as an apprentice, including the skills developed both in the workplace and through college study."*

Abhayjot added, *"I found the Stagecoach presentation very helpful, as it gave me a clear understanding of their apprenticeships, including both the day-to-day responsibilities and the selection process. They also shared useful interview techniques that I can apply to future opportunities."*

We are incredibly grateful to the team at Stagecoach for taking the time to visit and inspire our students. The event has opened students' eyes to a range of exciting career opportunities, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration with Stagecoach in the future.



Inspiring Visit from Former Student and Professional Photographer

On Friday 13th March, our Sixth Form Photography students had the opportunity to take part in something a little different when we welcomed back former student and professional photographer, Angela Ogunfojuri, to speak about her career.

During the session, Angela shared insights into her unconventional route into the photography industry, discussing the experiences, challenges and opportunities that have shaped her professional journey. Students were fascinated to hear about the realities of working in the creative sector and the different pathways that can lead to a successful career.

Former student and professional photographer (cont.)

The talk sparked a lively discussion, with students asking thoughtful and insightful questions about developing a portfolio, building a career in photography and navigating the industry.

During her visit, Angela was delighted to catch up with Executive Headteacher Mr Taylor, who was her economics teacher when she was in the Sixth Form.

We are extremely grateful to Angela for giving her time to return to school and speak with our students. She proved to be a fantastic role model for our aspiring photographers here at Robert Clack.



Year 12 Entrepreneurs visit Bauer Media Out of Home Advertising

Recently, the Year 12 Entrepreneur Academy students were given an exciting opportunity to visit Bauer Media Outdoor, where they immersed themselves in the dynamic world of creativity and digital marketing. The visit offered a valuable glimpse into the fast-paced environment of outdoor advertising and the strategic thinking behind successful campaigns.

The trip was designed to support students in developing their marketing skills, which they are using to promote their own products for the Entrepreneur Academy.

Bauer Media visit (cont.)

Year 12 student David shared:

"This was a really interesting and hands-on experience that highlighted just how much thought, creativity, and strategy go into effective advertising. Thanks to Jordan and Holly at Bauer Media Out of Home Advertising for such an engaging experience."

This inspiring visit was made possible through a connection first established via our Alumni Association. We extend our sincere thanks to Jordan and the entire team for their continued support in providing such meaningful, real-world learning opportunities. Experiences like this play a vital role in building students' confidence, broadening their horizons and inspiring future career aspirations.



Opportunity from Future First to hear from investment company BlackRock

Year 12 and 13 students were given a fantastic opportunity through Future First, the charity that supports and manages our alumni network, to attend a presentation by BlackRock, one of the world's largest investment companies. This event took place on Wednesday 4th February at our Gosfield Road site.

Black Rock visit (cont.)

Josh Dibbens, Head of Marketing, spoke about the wide range of opportunities available within the financial sector. He explained that whether you enjoy working with quantitative problems or prefer roles involving social interaction, there is a place for everyone in the industry. As the world's largest hedge fund, BlackRock helped students gain a better understanding of investments and how to manage money effectively.

Josh also highlighted the importance of investment management in everyday life, sharing examples such as managing pensions for retirees. Although BlackRock is the largest hedge fund in the world, the company also places strong emphasis on ethics and its mission of "helping people experience financial well-being."

Attendee, Year 12 student David, said: *"Not only did BlackRock help us learn more about the financial markets, but they also supported us in thinking about our futures as potential employees. Josh also gave us useful advice on how to prepare for interviews and how to create an effective CV."*

Year 13 student Carla added: *"I loved the BlackRock talk yesterday. It was really helpful and gave me a much clearer understanding of what BlackRock does, what a typical day in the company looks like, and what they look for when hiring new employees. It opened my eyes to a possible career path with them, as I hadn't realised how many different roles there are. Josh explained the finance roles within BlackRock and how the company helps manage people's money. It genuinely seems like the kind of place I would like to work in the future, and I would definitely recommend this talk to other students interested in finance."*

"I truly enjoyed the talk—Josh was great!"

BlackRock also offers training programmes such as "Big City Bright Future," an annual three-week paid work experience programme designed to support school leavers who aspire to work in competitive industries.

Many thanks to Future First for providing our students with this fantastic opportunity.

**Inspiring Futures in Sport and Education – Year 9 Options Assembly**

We were delighted to welcome former pupil Josiah Poulter back to Lymington to speak to students during a recent Year 9 Assembly. It was a pleasure to have him return and share his journey since leaving school.

Josiah spoke enthusiastically about his studies at the University of Manchester, where he is currently completing a BA (Hons) in Football Business and Finance — a degree that perfectly combines his passion for sport with mathematics and business.

His talk provided students with a valuable insight into the diverse opportunities available through higher education, highlighting how academic subjects can open doors to exciting careers within the sports industry. Josiah demonstrated clearly how interests developed at school can evolve into specialised degree pathways and fulfilling professions.

Inspiring futures in sports (cont.)

With many of our Year 9 students expressing a strong enthusiasm for sport, Head of Year and former student, Miss Katie Walker, recognised this as a fantastic opportunity to showcase the variety of routes available beyond school.

We are extremely grateful to Josiah for giving his time to inspire our students and for serving as such a positive and aspirational role model.



Year 9 Students Inspired by Medical Career Talk by Former Pupil

Year 9 students from Lyminster Fields recently took part in an engaging virtual session with Dr Lara Akinnawonu (class of 2017), who joined them via Microsoft Teams to share her experiences of working in medicine.

During the session, Dr Lara provided students with an insight into a "day in the life of a doctor", describing the role as varied, fast-paced and one that involves continual learning. She explained the wide range of responsibilities involved in medical practice and spoke about the personal and professional rewards that come with supporting patients and making a positive difference to people's lives.

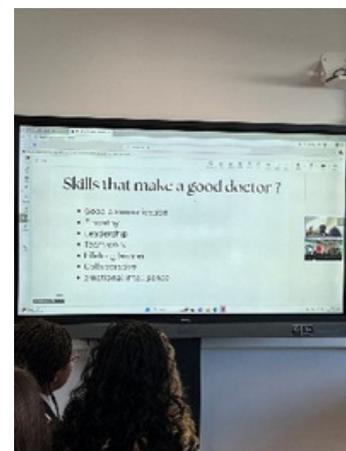
Medical career talk (cont.)

Dr Lara also highlighted the key qualities required for a successful career in medicine. She emphasised the importance of strong communication skills, empathy, resilience, and a commitment to continually developing knowledge and understanding throughout a medical career.

Students were encouraged to seek out opportunities for work experience that demonstrate important skills such as leadership, caring for others, and the ability to work effectively with people. These experiences, she explained, can play an important role in preparing for future study and careers in healthcare.

In addition to her clinical work, Dr Lara shared her involvement with the African Caribbean Medical Mentors (ACMM), a charity which provides 1-to-1 mentorship between black applicants to medical school and current medical students and doctors, illustrating how doctors can also contribute to wider community and charitable initiatives.

We are very grateful to Dr Lara for taking the time to speak with our students and for providing such an inspiring and informative insight into a career in medicine.



Alumni Power in Action

It is always inspiring to see our students thinking ambitiously about their futures and taking proactive steps towards achieving their goals.

Recently, two of our students — one in Year 11 and one in Year 12 — approached our Development Officer, Ellen Monk, seeking guidance as they explore careers in Social Work and Psychology. Keen to benefit from real-world insight, they asked whether any members of our alumni network might be able to support them.

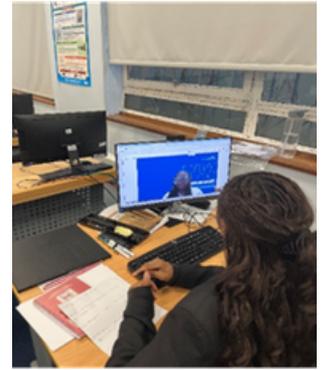
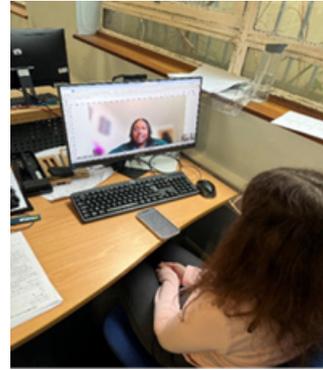
Ellen was delighted to connect them with former students Nanah Kamara and Chiamaka Oleh, who were more than happy to help. Nanah, who left Robert Clack in 2019, has since completed her undergraduate studies and is now a fully qualified Social Worker. Chiamaka is also thriving in the field of Psychology, building a successful career in the profession.

Virtual meetings were swiftly arranged, and our students came exceptionally well prepared. They asked thoughtful, in-depth questions about degree pathways, work experience opportunities, and the training required to succeed in their chosen careers.

Having positive role models such as Nanah and Chiamaka is an invaluable resource for our school community. Our students naturally relate to former pupils who have walked the same corridors, grown up in the same borough, and once stood exactly where they are now. You truly are inspiring the next generation here at Clack.

A huge thank you to Nanah and Chiamaka for so generously giving their time and sharing their expertise. Our students greatly appreciated your guidance and left feeling motivated and better informed about their future pathways.

Moments like these perfectly demonstrate the strength and impact of our alumni network.



Former Student Inspires Year 9 with His Degree Apprenticeship Journey

We were delighted to welcome former student, Jack Cooper, online via Microsoft Teams recently to speak to a group of Year 9 students about his exciting career pathway in construction and the opportunities that apprenticeships can offer.

After leaving Sixth Form in 2025, Jack successfully secured a degree apprenticeship with the Hill Group, where he now works as a Technical Coordinator. His visit provided students with valuable first-hand insight into alternative routes into the construction industry and highlighted the many possibilities available beyond the traditional university pathway.

Reflecting on his journey from secondary school through to Sixth Form, Jack spoke about the options he selected and how his subject choices aligned with his long-term ambitions. He also emphasised the importance of getting involved beyond the classroom, particularly through sport and his participation in the school's Business Entrepreneur Academy, which helped him develop confidence and a strong work ethic.

Degree apprenticeship journey (cont.)

A key message throughout his talk was the value of transferable skills. Jack explained how teamwork, communication, leadership, and resilience have all played a vital role in preparing him for the demands of the workplace.

Students were especially interested to learn what a typical week looks like in his role. As a Technical Coordinator, Jack works across live construction projects — liaising with various teams, reviewing plans, solving on-site challenges and ensuring developments progress smoothly and efficiently.

Alongside his professional responsibilities, Jack attends university one day per week as part of his degree apprenticeship. This balance of academic study and hands-on industry experience allows him to gain a degree-level qualification while building practical skills — all without following the traditional university debt route.

Jack also highlighted the school's strong partnerships with organisations such as the Construction Youth Trust, which provide mentoring and guidance for students interested in construction careers and apprenticeships.

He encouraged students to recognise and embrace the wide range of opportunities available to them, reminding them that such support is not available everywhere and should not be taken for granted.

We are incredibly grateful to Jack for giving his time to inspire our Year 9 students. His journey is a powerful example of the diverse and rewarding pathways available after school, and we look forward to seeing many more students follow in his footsteps.

**Clackers Escapees 1969-72 Reunited**

Members of the Facebook group, Clackers Escapees from years 1969-1972, came together for a special reunion filled with memories, laughter, and plenty of catching up.

The gathering took place on Wednesday 21st January at the Dairyman in Brentwood - a relaxed setting that proved perfect for an afternoon of reminiscing. Old stories were shared, familiar faces rediscovered, and the years seemed to melt away as conversations flowed.

Among those attending was Mike Farley who travelled from Bristol and Robin Mears who made the journey from Scotland. Ted Rogers and Steve Morskyj from the year above and former PE teacher Gerry Mountstevens also joined fellow escapees in reflecting on shared experiences and treasured moments from years gone by.

It was a heartfelt reunion that reminded everyone of the lasting bonds formed during those years — proof that time and distance do little to dull true friendships.

A lovely afternoon was had by all! Here's to the next one!



Spotlight On..... Stephen Halsey (Class of 1981)

**Stephen Halsey, Electrical Engineer for UK
Power Networks**

Working Life:

I work for a company called UK Power Networks - it's the old electricity company. I'm a trained electrical engineer. I've had a variety of jobs and for the last 13 years I've been working with customers connecting renewable energy (wind and solar) to our electricity distribution network enabling the transition to net zero.

What was your career journey to where you are now?

Rather untypical for those joining the workforce today. I joined the electricity company straight from school at 18 years of age and last year completed 44 years of service at the same company, although under different ownership, firstly as a nationalised industry and around 1990 the entire electricity network was sold off to private industry. The highlight of my career was to design the electricity network that hosted the London Olympic Games in 2012. I got to meet so many interesting people and to witness a fantastic sporting achievement.

Did you know you wanted to do this job when you were at school?

I knew I wanted to go into engineering and applied for several jobs at typical engineering companies and was lucky enough to be offered a 4-year engineering apprenticeship with what was then London Electricity Board.

School Day Memories:

I joined Robert Clack School in 1974 and left in 1981 after studying 'A' levels in Maths, Physics and Economics. I was one of only two people I recall that didn't go on to university - a conscious choice for me.

I have fond memories of my time at Robert Clack; it was a great school then and an even better one today I believe. I remember some of the teachers being rather scary and some far less so. Performances of Handel's Messiah and the Sixth Form school play stand out in my mind. My favourite lesson was definitely economics with Mr Cressy.

On joining the Sixth Form I was lucky enough to be asked to be Deputy Head Boy. I dated a fellow pupil from a year below for four years but sadly it wasn't to be! Now at 62 years of age, I still meet up at least once a year with some of my fellow Sixth Formers.

I remember the chairs in the Sixth Form common room having cushions on a row of elasticated webbing that could be removed. It was quite common for the middle rows of webbing to be removed leaving only the outer ones supporting the cushion. I'm sure readers can work out happened - yes, the middle ones were removed fellow pupils tried sitting on them and fell through to the floor. I'm sure health & safety would have something to say about it nowadays.

If I could go back to my school days now, I know this sounds a bit cliché, but I would probably pay a bit more attention and be less embarrassed about learning a new language!

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

For the first time since leaving school in 1981 I returned for the Christmas Concert last year. The school is clearly much bigger and hosts far more pupils. One of the biggest changes relates to how technology is now used - computers were only introduced to the school in my later years by maths teacher Mr Osborne.

Spotlight On... (cont.)

In some ways there are more opportunities through the use of new technology, especially AI, but by contrast many more traditional jobs no longer exist. Such is the pace of change today, jobs that exist in the first year of secondary school may not be there by the final year.

Advice for students today?

My advice would be to never miss an opportunity to try something different or new. Very few students know early on what they want to do when they leave school, so be open to new ideas.

And final words from Steve are, "The best way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing" - my favourite quote from Walt Disney!

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

**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).

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

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

**WISHING YOU ALL A VERY
HAPPY EASTER AND A
SUNNY SPRING**

**LOOK OUT FOR OUR NEXT
NEWSLETTER IN THE
SUMMER**