



Bafta-winning actress Olivia Colman returns to Gresham's school for "scary" role in speech day

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Bafta-winning actress Olivia Colman praised her old Norfolk school when she returned to hand out the prizes at speech day.



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Actress Olivia Colman with sixth form students Alicia Stark and Callum Chapman at Gresham's School speech day

She was a sixth former at Gresham's in Holt from 1990-92, and was back as star speaker to hand out awards to the class of 2013.

The actress, best known for her roles in Broadchurch, Twenty Twelve and Peep Show, admitted she was very nervous before giving her speech, saying standing up in front of her old school was the scariest thing she had ever done.

The school was "the first place I wanted to act," she recalled. "Perhaps I wouldn't have been an actor at all if it weren't for Gresham's."

Without the help of head of drama Paul Hands, who was mentioned in her recent Bafta acceptance speech, she "might still be wondering what I'm going to be 'when I grow up'."

Ms Colman admitted she wasn't the strongest academically but said that the school encouraged pupils to find what they loved, no matter how obscure, and "have a crack at it".

She had also learned "one of life's great lessons: don't be afraid to ask questions."

Her parting advice was: "Life is like a pinball machine. You ping and bump about. Remembering what you found fun and what made you unhappy will probably help you find out where you should go". Headmaster Philip John

said this year's leavers were particularly special to him as it was the first year group he had seen through to sixth form under his tenure.

He praised staff for their evening work of pupil enrichment, saying: "For too long pupils have been put under pressure to pass exams to the detriment of self-development."

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