The glitzy world of the Great Gatsby was the theme for the leavers’ ball at Gresham’s School at Holt.

Upper sixth students celebrated their time at the school in a marquee on the grounds at the weekend.

The ball was the climax to a very exciting weekend which saw former pupil Olivia Colman return to the school to present prizes at Speech Day.

The 350 guests who attended were greeted with a champagne reception.

There was a dazzling display of costumes and outfits sporting the great Gatsby look from flapper dresses to stunning avant garde accessories.

The Ball was organised by a committee of parents and members of staff to ensure a memorable evening for leavers and their families.

The Gatsby theme chosen was seen as a fitting choice due to its link to the recent release of the drama-documentary by locally-based Capriol films of Benjamin Britten – Peace and Conflict, filmed at the School last summer. Kathy John member of the organising committee said “The parents on the ball committee were delighted with the success of the event, and even the weather decided to play its part.”

A three-course meal was provided by Gresham’s catering team in a decorated marquee where a resident magician did tricks for guests at their tables. After dinner guests danced the night away to Justin Myers and The American Dream Bootleggers followed by a disco by Gresham’s own resident DJ’s Chris Cooper and Sam Curtis.

Back to school for award-winning actress

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

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.”