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Sir James Dyson donates £19m to his old boarding school as a thank you for giving him scholarship

Billionaire inventor Sir James Dyson has donated nearly £19m to his old school as a thank you for letting him study there for free following the death of his father.

Vacuum cleaner entrepreneur Dyson, 72, gave millions to the prestigious private school Gresham's, which he attended from the age of nine in 1956.

The school, whose fees top out at £36,000 a year, will build a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (Steam) education centre with the £18.75m fund.

Sir James attended the day and boarding school for ten years. His father was head of the Classics department but died soon after Dyson started, during the war in Burma.

The school supported him financially afterwards, offering him and his brother scholarships to stay on and board. Dyson was financially supported by the school after his father's death.

He said: "The generosity of the school, meant I could continue there after his death.

"I've observed that from the age of around six, children are very engaged. They are inventive, dreaming up ideas, and curious, wanting to know how they can be made.

"But these traits get stamped out of them, partly by the system and partly because the teaching of these subjects in schools has not kept up with the pace of technological change."

Gresham, in Holt, Norfolk, has recently built a £6.5 million recital hall and industry-standard recording studio, it also boasts 24 Steinway grand and upright pianos.

The school's alumni includes Olivia Coleman and W.H Auden. The new centre, named The Dyson Building, is due to be finished in September 2021.

He has previously donated to the University of Cambridge, Imperial College London, The Royal College of Art.