

Sir Peter Ogden, a Rochdale born computer entrepreneur, founder and former chairman of the Ogden Trust, opened a brand new 'Phiz Lab' on Tuesday (16 January) at Lowerplace Primary School, Kingsway.

The lab, designed from Ogden's love of Physics, is to encourage practical, student-led investigations for primary schools in Rochdale, with five other primary schools attending on the day.

Governors Barry Hobson, Tamartha Marsh, Ghulam Shahzad and Mohammed Imran were also in attendance, as well as the Chief Executive of the Ogden Trust, Clare Harvey and Sir Peter's son and now Chairman of the Trust, Cameron Ogden. Local councillors and the local authority were also involved.

The Ogden Trust's Phiz Labs were launched in 2013 with the slogan 'Making Physics Matter'. To date, there are over 20 different labs around the country.

The trust establishes, supports and funds Ogden Schools Science Partnerships in both primary and secondary education, with an overall goal to increase the number of students taking physics at GCSE, A-level and at university, and to encourage more physics graduates to become teachers.

The school applied for the Phiz Lab last year and once accepted for funding, were able to start their collaboration with the Ogden Trust through the Rochdale Primary Partnership.

The partnership consists of six primary schools in the Rochdale area including Lowerplace Primary, Milnrow Parish CofE Primary School, Crossgates Primary School, Moorhouse Primary School, St Edward's CofE Primary School and St Michael's CofE Primary School, Alkington.

Tamartha Marsh, Chairwoman of Governors for Lowerplace Primary School, said: "The long-term plan is that schools across the Borough can come here to use the facility as it's one of a kind and a really unique thing to have in a primary school. It is compulsory to have these kinds of labs in secondary schools but not primary schools and both points of education are equally as important, so I think it's a great opportunity for the children."

The principal aim of the Phiz Lab is to stimulate children's interest and excitement in science, but to also provide a valuable, practical training venue for science teachers.

Chris Lowe, the science teacher at Lowerplace, said: "We were invited to join the Ogden Trust cluster groups which included six schools in

Rochdale. Sir Peter attended here as a child, so we got a special invite into that.

"Each cluster group then had the opportunity to set up a lab and we were really fortunate to have a spare classroom for it all to come together.

"It has been a year or so in the making but we've finally got it ready now."

He further added: "We see science as a really important subject. We understand the skills it develops and if we can instil that in our children now at a primary age, it might mean that they then grow up to be a successful scientist. We just really want to develop their skills and celebrate what could make them successful."

As he returned to his primary school to unveil the specialist classroom, Sir Peter joined in with the children as they conducted a range of physics experiments. The experiments included parachute launches and landings, bulb brightening, looking at space soils, speed tests and educational quizzes regarding space and black holes.

Garry Johnson, Headteacher of Lowerplace, later conducted a tour of the school for Sir Peter and members of the Ogden Trust to see if anything had changed from his time there and to witness other science activities happening in the classrooms.

In the Key Stage 1 building, Year 1 were learning how things can float and sink and Year 2 learnt how much sugar is in Coca-Cola and the effect it can have on your teeth. Moving to Key Stage 2, Year 4 had the topic of forces in action and Year 5 practically tested air resistance in parachutes.

As Sir Peter cut the ribbon to officially open the lab, Headteacher Garry Johnson thanked him saying: "As you have seen today, our children are hungry for knowledge and I am so glad you can fund this and provide them with even more knowledge. It just makes it an even better story that you have a past here."