

# Masters of the Universe: National school competition ignites children's interest in space and robotics

The online educational publisher Twinkl and the EPSRC UK Robotics & Autonomous Systems Network (UK-RAS Network), have joined forces to launch a national School Robot Competition and celebrated today (Thursday 13th February) with an out-of-this-world event.

The competition invites classes and school groups to design space exploration robots using a specially created application or online.

The launch fittingly took place beneath the 80ft-long Blue Streak Rocket at the National Space Centre in Leicester. A group of students aged 8 to 11 from nearby Mellor Community Primary School and Forest Lodge Academy were invited to meet robotics experts from the UK-RAS Network and try out the app, which was designed and created by Twinkl for the competition.

The annual competition is open to groups of pupils aged 8-14. Each group needs to create virtual robots that can move across challenging space environments and complete a range of tasks.

Schools can enter by downloading and creating an account through the augmented reality (AR) app, which is available from today (Thursday 13th February) on the Apple App Store and Google Play, or by using the web-based version. The competition will be accepting entries until midnight on Friday 8th May.



**Jonathan Seaton, CEO and Co-founder of Twinkl, said:** "The competition is a really exciting way for children to explore STEM and test their collaboration and design skills. We hope that the competition once again gets children thinking about the future of robotics and inspires them to explore the subject further. We are really grateful to all the partners that have been involved and can't wait to join them later in the year to judge the entries."

**Karen Hammond, Headteacher of Mellor Primary School said:** "We're really interested in space, making robots, and anything to do with technology so we were really keen to attend the event. Some of the children here are digital leaders, they teach other children and also adults at the school how to use the latest technology.

"You have to be very creative in this industry, you have to be creative to come up with innovative solutions. The more creative they are, the more creative the ideas so it's wonderful to capture their interest at this age".

**A pupil from Forest Lodge Academy said:** "The app is so cool - I'm going to download it as soon as I get home. I can't wait to tell my parents that I know how to build a robot!"

The launch was also attended by competition partner Pipebots, a network developing micro-robots to fix problems in underground pipe networks and dangerous sites. Pipebots will be judging the competition with UK-RAS and Twinkl alongside a host of other organisations, networks, and research programmes that specialise in artificial intelligence, robotics and space.

The winning robots will be chosen based on a range of different criteria. The overall competition winner will receive a MiRo-E Robot from Consequential Robotics, an entertaining and emotionally engaging robot that responds to human interaction.

There will also be a range of exciting and unique prizes up for grabs, which have been generously donated by partners, including robot kits for students, robot laboratory tours, Lego EV3 systems and educational support for schools.

**Dr James Law, Director of Innovation and Knowledge Exchange, Sheffield Robotics and member of the UK-RAS Network said:** "We've had quite a few children ask whether they can buy a MiRo-E Robot and if they could take it home, they love it! That's one of the important

things about this competition though, to expose children to the opportunities within robotics and to inspire them to get involved.

“More than that, we’re coming to an age now where robots are becoming part of our everyday lives and this will only increase. Therefore, it’s important for children to learn about these technological developments as they’re going to get more exposure to them in the future.”

More information can be found at [twinkl.co.uk/robotics](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/robotics)

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