

Winners of Twinkl and UK-RAS School Robot Competition revealed

The winners of a national school competition to design the best space robot have been announced. Out of entries sent from across the UK, pupils from Landau Forte College Derby took first place whilst a class from Fittleworth C of E Village School in West Sussex, came second.

The School Robot Competition, organised by the educational publisher Twinkl and the EPSRC UK Robotics & Autonomous Systems Network (UK-RAS Network), invited pupils to design a robot that could move across Mars using a specially designed augmented reality app.

The robots had to be created and programmed to complete various challenges, including parking and drilling on the planet's unique surface.

Pupils aged between 11 and 14 from Landau Forte College's after-school robotics club took first place, entering robots that could manage multiple terrains and were the best at completing four of the five challenges set.

Fittleworth C of E Village School entered the best robot for the additional 'Line Follow' challenge, with a class of students aged 10 and 11 using components and programming to make the most efficient robot for the task.

Robin Williams, Head of Digital at Twinkl, said: "We were so impressed with the quality and diversity of the robots entered. We had over 100 robots to judge, which made it a challenge to pick a winner but also a joy as we were able to see some incredibly innovative design and programming. Our real focus was creating a challenge that would engage pupils in robotics and STEM and we were delighted to hear from schools about how enthused their students were when creating their robots."

Dr James Law, Director of Knowledge Exchange at Sheffield Robotics - who organised the competition on behalf of the EPSRC UK-RAS Network - said: "We were really thrilled with the response to this year's competition, which seems to have captured the imagination of schoolchildren and teaching staff up and down the country. The quality of the entries and level of engagement was incredibly high, demonstrating that there is significant enthusiasm and talent that can be nurtured as we continue to actively support the upcoming generation of UK robotics developers.

We're already working on plans for 2020, building on this year's success, and we're looking forward to this key schools competition growing from strength to strength."

Pupils from Landau Forte College Derby were presented with their award at the International Robotics Showcase in London, which was organised as part of UK Robotics Week. They will also be receiving their very own Miro-E robot from Consequential Robotics, an advanced AI robot that has been adapted for education.

Alison Brannick, Principal at Landau Forte College Derby, said: "I am delighted our students performed so well in the competition. We know how important programming skills will be for the future and their success in these challenges shows how well they are performing in STEM subjects.

"The Miro-E robot will be a valuable addition to our programming provision and will help our students take the next step with their technical expertise. Our students were so excited to receive their awards at the International Robotics Showcase, and to find out more about the latest stage in robotics."

Runners up Fittleworth C of E Village School will be receiving 3D printed models of the robots they entered.

James Russell, teacher of the winning class from Fittleworth C of E Village School, said: "The School Robot Competition was such a great opportunity for the children to engage in a purposeful engineering task that also ignited their natural competitiveness. I can't remember a time when they've been so thoroughly engaged in an activity as a whole class."

Although the competition has ended, the Twinkl Robotics app and online web version are still available to use for free globally. Visit twinkl.co.uk/robotics for more information and to download the app.

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