

## Robot buddies enter the classroom

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Robots have been helping researchers at the University improve social interaction and communication with autistic children in the school classroom.

Max and Ben, two Aldebaran Robotics manufactured knee-high humanoid robots that can dance to Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, play games and emulate Tai Chi have been trialled as buddies to pupils at Topcliffe Primary School in Castle Vale, Birmingham since March.

Dr Karen Guldberg, from the School of Education, explains: 'We have been looking at how technology can support pupils with autism to communicate more effectively.'

'Pupils and teachers are experimenting with the robots and other technologies in a developmental way and they are showing significant benefits for the classroom. The robots have been modelling good behaviour and acting as buddies,' she says.

Research shows that children with autism often find computers and technology safe, motivating and engaging, particularly in the areas of social interaction and communication.

Ian Lowe, Headteacher at Topcliffe Primary, adds: 'The robots have been brilliant at supporting autistic children with their learning. You can programme them to teach language, play games and model behaviour. We have even used them in assemblies. In the future we are looking to see if they can be used to support learning not just at school but at home as well.'

To find out more please click [here \(http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-20252593\)](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-20252593).



Robot buddies are helping autistic children learn