

Seoul trials pint-sized robots in nursery schools

25 November 2021

Seoul has started trialling pint-sized robots as teaching aids in kindergartens—a pilot project the city government said would help prepare the next generation for a hi-tech future.

The "Alpha Mini" is just 24.5 centimetres tall and can dance, lead sing-a-longs, recite stories and even teach kung-fu moves as children mimic its push-ups and one-legged balances.

"The robots help with the kids' creativity," teacher Byun Seo-yeon told AFP during a visit to the bright and busy Maru nursery in Seoul.

The [robot](#)'s eyes wink and blink—and its pupils become heart-shaped during conversation.

With a camera on its helmet, it takes photos that are instantly sent to a tablet for viewing.

"In the future, knowing how to manage AI and related tools will be very important," Han Dong-seog, from the Seoul government's childcare division, told AFP.

The robots are being trialled in 300 Seoul nurseries and childcare centres, with the government recommending the programme for children aged three to five.

"We believe having this experience in [nursery](#) schools will have a lasting effect throughout their youth and as adults," Han said.

The Alpha Mini has been adopted as part of a daily schedule for the class of four- to five-year-old students at Maru, with its ability to "fart" on command being a highlight during playtime.

"When I tell it to sing, it sings well. I tell it to dance and we dance together," said five-year-old Lee Ga-yoon.

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APA citation: Seoul trials pint-sized robots in nursery schools (2021, November 25) retrieved 3 December 2021 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2021-11-seoul-trials-pint-sized-robots-nursery.html>

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