

# (Hello World)

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMPUTING  
& DIGITAL MAKING EDUCATORS

## INTERVIEW: KATE FARRELL

Using data to solve real-world problems

## DECOLONISING COMPUTING

Widening global perspectives in computing

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THE  
**POWER**

OF  
**DATA**

INSPIRE STUDENTS TO USE  
DATA TO MAKE SENSE OF  
THE WORLD



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# IMPROVING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Actively engaging students in online classes has been challenging. Primary computing teacher **Sam Shallcross** discusses using Pear Deck, an interactive presentation tool

**H**ow great is it to be back in the classroom? Although I am so proud of what teachers around the world have achieved in delivering online learning from home, it was not without its difficulties! Apart from the obvious challenges of live teaching to a sea of tiny video images of students, like every teacher, I missed the spontaneous interactions and instinctive changes of direction that my lessons might normally take in front of a live audience.

I have always believed that computing is a journey of discovery, awe, and wonder for primary-aged students as they learn more about using technology for learning,

innovation, and exploration. Giving pupils the opportunity to work through their thought processes to problem-solve, suggest their own ideas, share with others, and evaluate are some of the most important tools to a computing teacher — often more important than the actual outcome of a coded game in Scratch. In the classroom, face-to-face, this is more straightforward to achieve; live on the screen, it felt so much harder to gauge every pupil's level of understanding and thought processes.

## Investigating interactive tools

It was during the second wave of home learning that I really began to investigate how I could improve pupil participation beyond sharing in the chat window of a Google Meet. Of course, we all know that after one pupil has typed in the answer, everyone else can just copy it, so I felt there was a loss of independent thought... and those who typed quickest got there first!

I first tried using breakout rooms in Google Meet, and it was helpful to be able to have conversations with smaller groups of students. The older primary pupils enjoyed the independence and responsibility of running their own group while I was working with a different group. But it still felt like the strongest or most

vocal students in the group overpowered the quieter students, and I was still struggling to hear all the voices in written comments. Splitting the class up and not being present in each space to listen and guide was difficult with lower-primary pupils, so I still felt this was not a tool that was engaging this age group.

Another tool I explored using was Jamboard, as this online whiteboard works well with Google Meet and is now integrated into the platform. While I was able to control contributions by changing the sharing permissions on the Jamboard, it is not possible to prevent students from deleting content while in edit mode. There are some excellent ways to use Jamboard for whole-class or group interactivity, but I was still looking for something that would engage all participants privately to support pupil voice for all.

## Discovering Pear Deck

Then I stumbled across Pear Deck. I had heard of it before, but had never had the opportunity to try it out, and now seemed as good a time as any. So I signed up to a training webinar one evening and found exactly what I had been looking for.

I use Google Slides to create most of my lesson content, sometimes sharing via Google Classroom so that the students can

## TRY IT FOR YOURSELF!

The basic use of Pear Deck is free, and Pear Deck are also offering their premium features to educators on a 30-day free trial ([peardeck.com/pricing](https://peardeck.com/pricing)).

For further information on using Pear Deck, I recommend a training webinar for beginners, run most Thursday evenings. Register at [peardeck.com/learn-pear-deck](https://peardeck.com/learn-pear-deck).





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edit their own slides or follow along what I am sharing on the screen.

The Pear Deck add-on instantly made my online lessons more inclusive and interactive. Suddenly, I was able to apply a drawing feature to a slide that invited a student to annotate with a text tool or draw with coloured markers over the slide. But what was truly amazing was that I was able to see all the students' contributions to the slide in real time, while they were only looking at their own! I quickly picked up on the text box feature, which allowed all the class to add their thoughts to a question I asked, and also the polling slide feature, so

spot misconceptions quickly and discuss verbally with students through the Google Meet, or type a private comment in reply to the students' annotations. The discussions we had became more relevant to their own thoughts and understanding.

### **Bringing virtual tools into the physical classroom**

I have only just started on my journey with Pear Deck, but now UK schools are back in the classroom, I have been able to use it a few times with some of my computing classes. Even face to face, with students working on their individual devices, it has

contribute to whole-class discussions. I feel I have a better insight into the understanding of the quieter members of the class and can challenge the thinking of the more confident.

By using Pear Deck, I have found a way to motivate, engage, assess, and connect with my students. When the power of learning is in their hands, the sky's the limit! **(HW)**

## **“ I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED COMPUTING IS A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY, AWE, AND WONDER FOR PRIMARY-AGED STUDENTS**

I could gauge their understanding before moving on. But these examples are just the tip of the iceberg! There are a whole host of features and ready-made content to help build a more inclusive lesson.

Using Pear Deck gave every student in my class the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas independently, knowing that only I could see them. I was able to

been useful in increasing engagement from all students, by allowing them to contribute to certain slides to show their understanding, rather than offering a hands-up answer.

In particular, while students are typing or annotating their ideas, it has given me more time to be able to work one to one verbally with students who find typing challenging but would also often be reluctant to



### **SAM SHALLCROSS**

Sam is a computing teacher at Bromley High Junior School, a Girls' Day School Trust school in the UK. She is also a Computing at School hub leader for Bromley and Hayes Primary Community (@bromleyJunComp).

# “HELLO, WORLD!”

Everything you need to know about our computing and digital making magazine for educators

## Q WHAT IS HELLO WORLD?

**A** Hello World is a magazine for computing and digital making educators. Written by educators, for educators, the magazine is designed as a platform to help you find inspiration, share experiences, and learn from each other.

## Q WHO MAKES HELLO WORLD?

**A** The magazine is a joint collaboration between its publisher, Raspberry Pi, and Computing at School (part of BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT).

## Q WHY DID WE MAKE IT?

**A** There's growing momentum behind the idea of putting computing and digital making at the heart of modern education, and we feel there's a need to do more to connect with and support educators, both inside and outside the classroom.

## Q WHEN IS IT AVAILABLE?

**A** Your 100-page magazine is available three times per year. Check out our new podcast too, to get more great Hello World content between issues. See page 8 for more details.



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