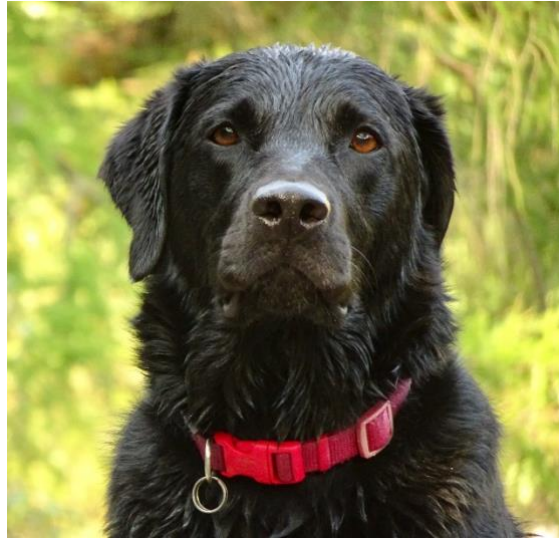


## Willow, Our School Dog.



My name is Willow and I am a very friendly and calm black Labrador. I have been coming to work with Katy, our Family Learning Mentor and Forest School leader, since I was a puppy. At first, I came for a few hours each week but now I am full time. When I'm not at work, I love swimming in waterfalls. I was born in October 2016.

I really love coming to school every day and spending time with my friends. Some days I am in school and other days I am in the woods at Forest School.

I hope to see you soon.



### The benefits of School Therapy dogs

Research has shown many benefits of school therapy dogs, including cognitive, social, emotional and physical benefits.

Companionship with a therapy dog stimulates many positive responses in the brain, including memory, problem solving, comprehension and understanding. Spending time with Willow releases feel-good hormones, including serotonin, oxytocin, and prolactin. These hormones reduce stress and sorrow, whilst boosting mood and increasing happiness.

Willow provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, encouraging conversation, responsibility, wellbeing and helping to build positive relationships with others. She encourages compassion, trust, respect and patience.

Children who develop a relationship with Willow, experience entirely non-judgmental and unconditional interaction, which is crucial for all children's development but particularly those who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and those who have experienced trauma and adverse childhood experiences.

Reading to therapy dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills. The calming effect of a dog's presence encourages a relaxed and comforting environment. The therapy dog listens to children read without being judgemental or critical which nurtures the child's enthusiasm for reading and builds confidence to read aloud. Willow can assist in breaking down barriers to learning and loves listening to stories.

Willow only works with pupils who wish to work with her. She has a strict cleanliness routine, and her presence is risk assessed and continually monitored.

