

Meet Tully, our school therapy dog



Tully is a working line Labrador Retriever and was born on 27 October 2023. She started coming into Kilmorie when she was just 3 months old. When she is not at school she lives with Kate and her family. Given that she is just a puppy, it was important that Tully had a lot of time at the beginning to get used to the school environment and for the adults and children to get used to having her around.

We are affiliated with The Dog Mentor (link at the bottom of the page if you would like more information on this) and 3 of our staff – Kate, Nicola and Philippa – are trained dog handlers. We envisage getting more staff trained to be dog handlers in the future as Tully works towards her Dog Mentor gold award. In February 2023 Tully successfully completed her Dog Mentor Programme assessment. After that, all classes (except for Nursery) were gradually introduced to Tully and have been trained to be 'Tully ready' whenever Tully comes into the classroom.



The wellbeing and personal development of children is a priority at Kilmorie and our ethos behind having a school therapy dog is based on research into the potential benefits of having a dog at school and evidence that school dogs help develop children's reading skills, improve behaviour, attendance and academic confidence. They also help improve children's understanding of responsibility and develop their empathy and nurturing skills. Other benefits include:

- Cognitive Development – being with a dog stimulates memory and improves problem-solving and game-playing skills
- Emotional Development – improves self-esteem and lifts mood. Dogs can also teach compassion and respect for other living things as well as relieving anxiety.
- Physical Development – interaction with a pet reduces blood pressure, provides tactile stimulation, assists with pain management, gives motivation to move, walk and stimulates the senses.
- Social Benefits – a dog provides a positive mutual topic for discussion, develops social skills and interaction with others.

At Kilmorie, we are already beginning to see a lot of these benefits in action and it is wonderful to see the impact she is having on the children she spends time with. The staff very much enjoy having Tully around as well. It is important that Tully also benefits from and enjoys the school environment. Being a Labrador she craves human company (and food....) and is therefore equally benefitting from the relationships being formed. We have been introducing Tully slowly to school life and her role in it. She still needs a lot of sleep and downtime. At the moment these are some of the aspects of school life Tully is involved with:

- meeting and greeting parents and children at the school gate a few mornings a week
- spending pastoral time every afternoon with Nicola and Shivani and the children they see
- listening to groups of year 2 children read once a week
- giving some children who benefit most from it some Tully playtime after lunch
- supporting children emotionally on an ad hoc basis throughout the week
- linking Tully to our curriculum, for example learning about what living things need and how to look after animals in our Animals Including Humans science topic and understanding why we should look after living things and identifying ways to do this as part of our PSHE learning

Now that Tully is a bit older and more settled at school, we will be implementing a more structured timetable from September 2024 onwards and it will be available to see here, along with regular photo updates. This will include regular reading sessions with children throughout the school and a regular weekly slot for children who will benefit the most from pastoral time with Nicola and Tully. We will be making sure that Tully will sometimes work in classes alongside the children as well as working with small groups or individual children.



Improving our game-playing skills, confidence and wellbeing through playtime with Tully



Developing our reading skills and building our confidence to read aloud in a smaller group to a non-judgemental listener

Tully has made the news! Click here to see an article in First News about Tully and she works with.

<https://www.thedogmentor.co.uk/#::~:~:text=The%20Dog%20Mentor%20Programme%20has,emotionally%20and%20socially.>

