

Minibeasts in our garden

Lesson at a glance

Open by asking who hides under a leaf or log, holding up a magnifier and a snail, woodlouse or worm photo. Model one gentle lift-look-replace cycle, then take the class to the garden for short hunt bursts with magnifiers, soft brushes and shaded bug pots. Pupils look closely at a live find or photo card, name colour, shell, legs or soft body, return every animal, wash hands, and draw one minibeast on the Investigation Journal page before a share of what they noticed and how they kept animals safe.

Learning objectives

- Find and look closely at a minibeast in the school garden using a magnifier
- Draw one minibeast they found and handle living things gently

Before the bell – prep

Scout the garden spot (log pile, leaf litter, pots, hedges) and a short safe route the day before. Print Investigation Journal pages (or plain paper) and nature photo cards A–C. Gather magnifiers, bug pots and soft brushes; optional child garden gloves. Wet-day fallback: damp litter tray indoors plus the cards.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
chunky plastic magnifiers	1	pupil	school kit	one shared magnifier per pair, or looking with eyes only
clear bug pots with air holes	1	group	school kit	clear recycled tub with a few small air holes punched by an adult
soft paintbrushes	1	group	classroom	a dry leaf used gently as a scoop by an adult
child garden gloves (optional support)	1	pupil	classroom	washable hands only, with handwashing straight after (default path)
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	provided printable	plain paper for a drawing of one minibeast (same success criteria: shape plus one noticed feature)
crayons	1	pupil	classroom	colouring pencils
nature photo cards of Irish garden minibeasts	1	class	classroom	one clear IWB photo of each minibeast for whole-class looking

Safety watch-point

Stay with the class; no tasting or hands near mouths; never leave pots in sun; return every living thing; wash hands on return. Children never lift heavy logs alone.

Teaching moves

- **Look and wonder:** Live-model one cycle with a leaf and magnifier: I wonder... I think... I look... say two notices, then soft hands and put the leaf back. Bring in minibeast, look closely and gentle hands only as you model. Ask how hands will keep a minibeast safe; frame them as small living neighbours, never dirty or scary.
- **Minibeast hunt:** Before exit, show the route, stop line and regroup signal (two claps or raised hand). Issue magnifiers and group pots/brushes. Work short hunt bursts; adults stay close; children never lift heavy logs alone. Freeze on a find, guide with a soft brush into a shaded pot only if needed, and put every animal back before you leave the spot.
- **Look closely:** Still outdoors (or at the indoor tray), rotate small clusters around adult-held shaded pots or Cards A–C. Model holding the magnifier near the eye and moving closer slowly. Prompt two or three notices only: colour, hard/soft/shell, legs or none, still or slow. Looking without touching counts as full success.
- **Show and draw:** Hands washed first. Give crayons and the Investigation Journal page. Coach big shape first, then one noticed feature (shell, lots of legs, long soft body). Scribe a one-word label only if the child wants it. Fast finishers may add where it lived on the same page — paper only.
- **What did we notice?:** Invite three or four children to hold up a drawing and say one noticing; fold the class in (Who else saw a shell? Who looked under a leaf?). Draw out tiny outdoor animals, looking closely, and gentle hands plus putting back. One short line on garden carers; end on pride as careful garden explorers.

What it should show

Likely Irish garden finds are snails (spiral shell), woodlice (grey-brown, many little legs, may curl) and worms (long, soft, pinkish-brown, no legs). Most drawings show one big body shape plus one feature such as a shell or lots of legs. If the spot is bare, photo cards still give the same notices; looking without touching is full success for a nervous child.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Pupils say minibeasts are dirty or scary and want to jump back or squash them.** — Revoice them as small living neighbours we watch kindly. Model freeze-and-look with the magnifier; celebrate a look with no touch as brave science.
- **Pupils grab, poke, or try to keep a minibeast in the pot to take inside.** — Stop and re-model soft brush, shaded pot, and put it back exactly where it was found. Ask: How do gentle hands keep it safe?



Lesson 7

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Pair at the teacher table for a shared magnifier look at an adult-held pot or Card A/B/C; looking without touching meets the aim. • Support the drawing with big shape first, then one detail; scribe a one-word label if wanted.	• Prompt a second notice (colour plus legs/shell) and where the animal was found before they draw.	• On the same Journal page, add the place it lived and tell the class one gentle action they used to keep it safe.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to oral language and Art: name one feature and draw the big shape with one noticed detail.

