Lesson 8

living-things

Our school habitat and its food chain

Lesson at a glance

Open with a photo or window-view of a quiet school corner and ask who might live there unseen. Teach habitat, then take the class outside to one microhabitat (log, leaf pile or hedge) with magnifiers and trays. Back inside, build a shared plants/animals list, order dead leaves → woodlouse → blackbird on the flow-builder interactive, then each pupil draws a different chain from the class list in the Investigation Journal before a partner talk on how living things depend on each other.

Learning objectives

- List living things found in one school-ground microhabitat
- Build a simple food chain with arrows showing who eats what
- Explain that living things in a place depend on each other

Before the bell — prep

The day before, choose one safe microhabitat with clear boundaries and check the ground for glass or litter. Gather magnifiers, trays and gloves; print the Investigation Journal page. For wet-weather fallback, laminate microhabitat photo cards and bring in a tray of leaf litter from the grounds.

Lesson 8

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
hand magnifiers	1	pair	school kit	share one magnifier between a small group, or use careful naked-eye looking
shallow collection trays	1	group	classroom	clean plastic lunch boxes or lid trays
gloves	1	pupil	supermarket	pupils handle leaf litter with a stick and wash hands thoroughly afterwards
food-chain cards (dead leaves, woodlouse, blackbird)	1	class	provided printable	write the three names on sticky notes or mini whiteboards
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	provided printable	plain paper with the same drawing task written on the board
laminated microhabitat photo cards	1	class	provided printable	show microhabitat photos on the IWB only
tray of leaf litter (indoor fallback)	1	class	outdoors/ nature	use photo cards or IWB photos only

Safety watch-point

Check the spot for glass and litter first. Pupils move gently, do not harm living finds, return every creature exactly where it was, then wash hands after trays and magnifiers are packed away.

Teaching moves

- **What is a habitat?:** Teach only habitat here — hold food chain and depend for later. Link the word to the photo or real corner from Getting Started and invite two or three ideas about food, water, shelter or hiding places. Keep the board talk short so the class stays curious for the outdoor explore.
- **Explore a microhabitat:** Keep the whole class at one spot. You lift the log or leaf layer first and hold finds where all can see. Mark a short edge and invite three or four pairs forward for about one minute while watching pairs call out what they notice; swap once if time allows. Return every living thing exactly where it was found before walking back.
- **What did we find?:** Scribe a two-column board list — Plants and Animals/minibeasts — using common names only. Prompt which make their own food, which feed on dead leaves, and which might hunt. Tally repeats and keep the list visible for the chain step.
- **Build a food chain:** Drive the flow-builder interactive in explore mode, layout chain, with the three cards. Do not reveal the order first — pupils call it out and a volunteer drags. Target: dead leaves → woodlouse → blackbird with is-eaten-by arrows. Retell the links aloud, then ask which way the arrows point and what would happen if the dead leaves disappeared.
- **Draw our food chain:** Pupils draw one chain from the class list that is not the board model. Circulate for arrow direction and clear labels first; habitat sketch is optional stretch only. If stuck, prompt what eats leaves or what a bird might eat. Fast finishers tell a partner one extra link as talk, not more drawing.
- **Living things depend on each other:** Cue pairs for 45–60 seconds each on how the living things in the explored habitat depend on each other. Anchor to the school-ground chain: what if dead leaves went, what if fewer woodlice or worms. Draw out that a change to one link can affect the others, then take a few hands-up shares.

What it should show

Expect finds such as woodlice, worms, snails, spiders, moss, grass or daisy under a log, in leaf litter or along a hedge. The modelled chain is dead leaves → woodlouse → blackbird with arrows pointing to the eater. Journal pages should show a different two- or three-link chain from the class list with arrows the right way. A reversed chain is almost always an arrow-direction mix-up, not a wrong feeding idea — retell plant material first, then eater, then hunter.

Lesson 8

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Pupils draw the arrow from the eater back to the food, thinking it means 'goes to eat'.** — Hold the three cards and retell slowly: dead leaves are eaten by the woodlouse; the woodlouse can be eaten by the blackbird. Say the arrow means 'is eaten by' or 'gives energy to', so it always points to the eater.
- **Pupils think a habitat is only a big wild place, not a tiny school corner.** — Point back to the log, leaf pile or hedge and restate: a habitat is any place living things find food, water, shelter and space — even under one log.
- **Pupils invent hunter links the class never saw, such as foxes or sharks, to finish a chain.** — Keep the class list visible and only allow organisms named from the explore. Offer supported school-ground alternatives: leaf litter → worm → blackbird, or grass → snail → thrush.

Differentiation

- {'emerging': ['Less confident pairs call out one plant and one animal for you to scribe on the class list; for the journal, start them with something green and ask what would eat it, checking only a two-link chain with arrows to the eater.'], 'developing': ['Confident pairs aim to notice three different living things outside; on the journal they build a three-link chain from the class list and say who eats whom aloud.'], 'proficient': ['After their own chain, ask what would happen if one link disappeared, or rebuild once with a second spoken chain from class finds only (e.g. leaf litter → worm → blackbird), still using the same arrow rule.']}

Cross-curricular hook

Link to Geography and Irish places children know — the same who-eats-what idea appears in a hedgerow, a bog and on the seashore.