A Great Competition for Primary Schools

To encourage pupils to get outside to learn more about living things and their habitats and to use the outdoor classroom. Simply identify a local habitat, get the pupils to explore and discover the minibeasts (bugs) that live there, draw them and record their findings – it's that easy!

Now in its ninth year, this exciting competition, fits into the curriculum and helps to develop Working Scientifically too; it also fits perfectly with many of the topics which NI teachers use to teach the curriculum area called the World Around Us.

AGES 5-7:

Children will learn to use simple equipment to help observe and capture the minibeasts and then to use observation skills and name them. There are also opportunities to then record the data in simple form.

Questions relating to investigation could include 'How does the weather affect them?' or 'Who lives in a place like this?' or 'What does this one eat?'.

By investigating the habitats, you can look at simple food chains and then identify and name the different sources of food.

Learners at Foundation Phase in Wales will investigate outdoor learning environments, whilst working co-operatively, making observations and measurements and keeping records. They will observe differences between animals and communicate these observations and measurements to others.

AGES 7-9:

Children have questions after exploring and talking, developing ideas about living things and familiar environments. Identifying and classifying skills will build on previous work in order to start to use keys for identification, and looking for patterns between local organisms and those found further afield. Patterns and relationships between the habitats and types of minibeasts found there can also be investigated. There are opportunities for observation over time. Activities include, for example, life cycles, and when you begin to see certain minibeasts (recognising that they are unlikely to see butterflies, bees, etc., in winter months).

Pupils will also be able to take the time to recognise that environments can change (as part of Observation over Time, particularly in relation to human activities such as littering and dog walking, as well as changes from mowing lawns, to name a few, which could form their own investigations in terms of surveys) and then to think about the dangers this poses to the habitats and the minibeasts that live there.

AGES 9-11:

Pupils can refine their choice of the most appropriate ways to answer their own and other's questions using different types of science enquiry. Developing and mastering the drawing of conclusions using their evidence and their increasing scientific knowledge and understanding to explain their findings.

Recognised keys should not only be used, but pupils should also develop their own, testing them on their peers. They should build on this to produce other information records, so mastering a range of presentation methods and styles to identify and describe living things and any patterns that they find in the natural environment.

At this stage pupils may also be able to consider whether concepts such as the idea of global warming are 'real', so considering if the evidence supports the idea.

Welsh learners will have the opportunity to further develop skills of observation and measurement and communicate their findings through writing, drawings and diagrams, whilst using relevant scientific vocabulary. Through fieldwork they will investigate how environmental factors affect which animals grow and live in different environments.