Teacher Resource Sheet

What is our place made of?

What this lesson is for

Children learn to read their own locality on a map and name what the land around the school is made of. The lesson moves from plain noticing to shared marks and a key so the class can answer in the same words.

In the curriculum (NCCA Primary SEE, 2025)

Stage 3, My locality: Environment and sustainable living. Geography: investigate, name and describe physical features of the local, natural environment such as rivers, mountains, lakes, seas, islands, biodiversity, etc., identifying opportunities to become involved in enhancing and protecting them.

Before the lesson

- Print one activity sheet for each child; it comes with the lesson.

How the hour runs

1. Where are we?	5 min	4. Write it in your copy	4 min
2. Read and learn	8 min	5. What we learned	5 min
3. Mark what we can see	23 min		
Then the activity sheet, at the children's desks			about 15 min

Teaching tips

- Step through the slides and ask children to explain key words in their own words.
- Call one child at a time to the board to add marks to the map.
- Keep the marked contour map visible on the board during the discussion.
- Walk around the room to check children's writing in their copybooks.

What to watch for

- Children may think close lines mean higher ground; explain that height comes from the colour bands.
- Children might add too many marks; limit to eight or ten marks in total.
- Some children may need prompting for the sentence; point to a colour on the key.
- **A common wrong idea:** “A map is a complete picture of everything in a place.” Say a map is a choice: it shows some things and leaves others out. Point at the key and ask what this map decided to show, and name one thing it cannot show, such as noise.

Help and stretch

- Support: Prompt children who are stuck by pointing to one colour on the key.
- Extension: Invite children to suggest things a map cannot show, such as sounds or smells.
- Support: Allow children extra time to finish writing the sentence in their copy.

Lesson 1

If you are short of time

Take fewer marks on the contour map, about five clear ones. Keep the copy sentence and the class restating what the place is made of.

Background for you

A map shows a place as if you were looking straight down from above. A street map picks out roads and buildings; a height or contour map uses colour bands and labelled lines to show how high the ground is. Lines that sit close together mean the slope is steep. Height itself comes from the colours and the numbers on the lines, not from how tight the lines look.

In this lesson, what a place is made of means the physical things the class can mark: high and low ground, water, trees, buildings and bare ground. The maps with the lesson already show the school's own area. Maps leave out smells, sounds and how a place feels; that limit is useful to say aloud when a child asks.

Key words

map	a picture of a place drawn as if you were looking down from above
high ground	land that sits up higher than the land around it
low ground	land that sits lower than the land around it
features	the things a map shows, such as water, trees and buildings
key	the box that tells you what each mark or colour means

Children will ask

Why can't I see my house on the map? The map only shows some things, at a size that fits the board. Your house may be too small to draw, or it may sit outside the bit we can see.

Is high ground always a mountain? No. A low hill or the top of a sloping street counts as high ground if it sits above the land around it.

Activity sheet answers

1. Label Label the picture. Use the words in the box.
1 high ground. 2 water. 3 trees. 4 buildings. 5 bare ground.

2. Circle Circle the better answer for each question.
1 above. 2 steep. 3 what each mark means. 4 a hill.

3. Write Write two features you might find near a school. Use words from the key words box.
A good answer names two features from the lesson words, such as water, trees, buildings, high ground or low ground. Example: Near a school you might find trees and buildings.