



What a modern inspection platform has to get right

A short note for education inspectorates considering how to digitise the inspection lifecycle

Most systems sold to ministries manage *schools*. Very few manage the *inspection of* schools — which is a different problem, with an evidence trail, an approval chain, and a publication obligation at the end of it. This note sets out the handful of things that decide whether such a platform is genuinely useful to an inspectorate, or simply another system for it to maintain. It is written from the inspection process, not from the technology.

1. The approval chain is the hard part — not the visit

The school visit is the visible work. The difficulty lives afterwards: getting a draft report from a lead inspector, through quality assurance, back to the school for response, through senior sign-off, and out to publication — with a defensible record of who decided what, and when.

A platform earns its place here or nowhere. The test is whether it handles the **unhappy path**, not the happy one:

- A report rejected at QA and sent back for revision, then resubmitted — without losing the original judgements or the audit trail.
- A school's formal response to findings, captured against the specific judgement it contests, not bolted on as a loose comment.
- A status that is always unambiguous: any inspector can see exactly where any report sits, and what is blocking it.

A useful diagnostic when evaluating any system: ask to see a report rejected and resubmitted. If the demo only shows a report moving cleanly forward, it has shown you the easy 20%.

2. Every judgement must trace back to its evidence

An inspection judgement that cannot be traced to the observation behind it is indefensible the moment it is challenged — by a school, a ministry, or an auditor. This is the single most important property of an inspection record, and the easiest to lose when a paper-and-spreadsheet process is digitised carelessly.

- Each judgement links to the specific evidence — lesson observations, document review, interviews — that produced it.
- The link survives editing, re-grading and the passage of years, so a report defended long after publication still holds together.
- Evidence is captured *on site*, at the point of observation, rather than reconstructed from memory

days later.

3. AI can draft. It must never decide.

AI is genuinely useful in inspection — for compiling school context, structuring collected evidence, and turning an inspector's notes into well-formed draft prose. It removes the administrative weight, which is considerable. But its role has a hard boundary, and a credible platform enforces it in the architecture, not in a policy document:

- **Every AI-generated output requires named human approval** before it affects any published outcome. Nothing reaches a school automatically.
- The judgement itself is always the inspector's. AI structures and drafts; it does not grade.
- **Every AI action is written to an append-only audit log** — so a year later the inspectorate can show precisely what was generated, by what, and who signed it off.

This matters more each year. A government inspectorate must be able to answer, to a minister or an auditor: *where was AI used, and who was accountable for the result?* A platform that cannot answer that question cleanly is a liability, however capable it appears.

4. Data must be sovereign — and provably segregated

Inspection data is among the most sensitive an education system holds: named pupils, identifiable staff, judgements with real consequences. For an inspectorate, three things are non-negotiable:

- **Segregation is architectural, not procedural.** Where a platform serves more than one client, one jurisdiction's data must be structurally incapable of informing another's — not merely a rule an administrator is trusted to remember.
- **Residency is a decision the inspectorate makes**, not one imposed by the supplier. Where the data is hosted, and under whose jurisdiction, is the client's call.
- **Exit is defined before entry.** Full export in open formats, and a documented path out, agreed at the start. Data that a supplier can hold hostage was never sovereign.

5. The framework is yours — the platform must be configurable to it

Every inspectorate is different: its evaluation areas, its grading scale, its inspection categories, its approval routes, its report structure. A platform hardcoded to one country's model forces every other client to adopt that model — which no serious inspectorate will, nor should.

The right question is not "does it match our framework today?" but "when our framework changes — and it will — is that a configuration change or a redevelopment project?" A framework revision should not stall published output for a year while the system catches up.

What good looks like, in one line

A defensible judgement, traceable to its evidence, moved through an approval chain that survives challenge, assisted by AI that never decides, on data the inspectorate wholly controls, within a framework that is genuinely its own.

None of this is exotic. But it is the part that is hard to build and easy to get wrong — and it is worth testing for directly before committing to any system, this one included.

Prepared by Simon Bell, founder of EDUINSPECT360, who developed the national school inspection system for Jamaica's

National Education Inspectorate. Offered as a contribution to the field; no obligation attached.

EDUINSPECT360 Limited · Company No. 15126870 · Birmingham, United Kingdom · simon@eduinspect360.com ·

www.eduinspect360.com