

How Heathfield Primary went into inspection knowing their evidence was there

Read how Intelligent Evidence helped Mark Thornley map his school's strengths clearly against the new framework and hold his ground during a rigorous two-day inspection.



About the school

Heathfield Primary School is a one-form entry primary school in Bolton, led by Headteacher Mark Thornley.

The school recently completed its first Ofsted inspection under the new 2025 framework, receiving a strong outcome across the board.

The challenge

The 2025 Ofsted framework is an exact-fit model. Where previous frameworks allowed inspectors to make best-fit judgements across a body of evidence, the new framework requires schools to demonstrate evidence against every descriptor in the toolkit – line by line.

For Mark, the challenge wasn't whether the evidence existed. He knew his school was strong. The challenge was having that evidence clearly mapped, accessible, and ready to use under pressure.

With three inspectors spending two days in a one-form entry school, the scrutiny was thorough. Mark wanted to go in knowing exactly where his evidence stood against both the expected and strong standards, and to be able to respond

"It's the most purposeful activity I've ever done. It definitely got us to where we wanted it to be. I knew in my heart of hearts that this was a strong school and I had the evidence to prove it – it wasn't just a gut feeling."



Mark Thornley
Headteacher, Heathfield Primary School

confidently to whatever the inspection threw at him.

The solution

Mark began using Intelligent Evidence in the months before his inspection, uploading documents and mapping them against the Ofsted grade descriptors.

Rather than writing a broad narrative self-evaluation, he used the platform to generate a clear evidence summary – a document that mapped his school's existing evidence directly against each descriptor at both the expected and strong standards.

For the first time, the evidence base wasn't something Mark built alone. The SENCO, deputy headteacher, and early years lead each contributed their own sections directly through the platform.

Once everything was pulled together, the whole leadership team reviewed it together and governors had visibility through the exported summary too.

"I've always written the SEF and collated evidence myself and maybe sent the final version out to the team to look at. Because of the way Intelligent Evidence has everything set up, they can just log in themselves and do their areas. It was just easier to do."



Mark Thornley

Headteacher, Heathfield Primary School

Uploading the evidence summary to the inspection portal in advance meant inspectors could review it before they arrived.

From the very first meeting, they were referencing details from the document Mark had shared – information that could only have come from what he'd uploaded. The conversation started from a position of clarity rather than explanation.

The results

A clear, mapped evidence base from the start

By the time the inspection call came, Mark had a complete picture of where his evidence sat against every descriptor – at both the expected and strong standards.

Heathfield Primary School

URN: 105172

Address: Henniker Road, Heathfield Primary School, Bolton, Lancashire, BL3 3TP

Inspection report: 28 April 2026

Exceptional

Strong standard

Expected standard

Needs attention

Urgent improvement

[Our grades explained](#)

✓ **Safeguarding standards met**

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Rather than approaching inspection with a broad sense of his school's strengths, he had specific, documented evidence ready to reference.

That clarity shaped every conversation from day one.

Confidence when the pressure was highest

By the end of day one, inspectors had flagged specific grade descriptors where the evidence hadn't yet landed in the room. For a moment, strong felt uncertain.

"It helped me make sense of all the documentation we have as a school and how that matches against the framework.

It gave me the confidence before that phone call that we were an expected school at the very least – and then a strong school when I started to work through the strong guidelines."



Mark Thornley

Headteacher, Heathfield Primary School

That evening, he went back to his evidence base. He was confident that gaps were covered – he felt he just hadn't pushed hard enough in the reflection meetings.

On day two, he returned ready to make the case. In each focused meeting, he worked through his evidence summary alongside the inspector, checking off coverage descriptor by descriptor. The evidence held.

A leadership team that owned the evidence

Because every member of the SLT had contributed to and reviewed the evidence base, no one went into inspection relying solely on Mark's version of the school's story.

The SENCO had built the inclusion section. The deputy had covered curriculum. The early years lead had their area covered. Governors had seen the summary.

"We all looked at it and just went through it all and made sure it all made sense to everybody.

Everyone felt, pre-Ofsted, that we had enough evidence for strong."



Mark Thornley
Headteacher, Heathfield
Primary School

By the time inspectors arrived, the whole team understood what the evidence said and could speak to it.

The evidence base that runs itself, so you can run your school

Mark plans to keep building his evidence base term by term – uploading the Ofsted report itself, adding documents from school improvement visits, sharing the summary with governors each term.

He expects to be more selective now, focusing on the documents that most clearly demonstrate the strong standard rather than uploading everything.

The gaps that emerge won't just flag inspection readiness – they'll inform the school development plan.



Find out where your evidence stands

Book a demo

Book a demo and see how Intelligent Evidence maps your existing documentation against the framework – so you can see exactly where you're strong and where the gaps are.