

Value for Money conclusion

Risk identified	Findings and conclusions
<p>Management of schools</p> <p>The Council's management of the governance of schools was found to be weak and an Education Commissioner was appointed by the Secretary of State. This appointment is continuing and the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) has responsibility for implementing the improvement plan. The key risk is that plan implementation will be slower than envisaged and underlying issues will not be effectively addressed.</p>	<p>We concluded that there were weaknesses in the Council's arrangements to manage risks effectively and maintain a sound system of internal control, demonstrating and applying the principles and values of good governance, as part of informed decision making and planning, organising and developing the workforce effectively to deliver strategic priorities as part of strategic resource deployment.</p> <p>The Birmingham Education and Schools' Strategy and Improvement Plan (2015-16) was subject to an LGA peer challenge which reported to the Council in December 2015. The peer challenge considered five work streams. Its findings included the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has made good progress across the five work streams • There is confidence amongst members, officers and partners that the basics for strong effective city wide system of school improvement • Stronger professional leadership is making a significant impact and governance is now high on the agenda • The Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) is widely regarded as the right vehicle for school improvement and has good buy-in from schools. <p>These findings are not wholly consistent with the Ofsted monitoring visit findings, which indicated that there are continuing and serious weaknesses in the management of schools. In particular, arrangements for ensuring children with special educational needs receive full time education, weak links with independent schools and ensuring appropriate suitability checks are carried out for potential governors of schools not maintained by the Council.</p> <p>As part of the assessment of schools governance improvement Birmingham Audit (internal audit) have been commissioned to carry out a programme of audits over a two year period. Their findings so far have shown that there are a range of governance issues to address across the schools visited (approximately a third of all Birmingham schools).</p> <p>We identified in our initial risk assessment that the key risk was that plan implementation will be slower than envisaged and underlying issues will not be effectively addressed. Although it is clear that progress has been made with the establishment of the BEP and the implementation of the improvement plan there is still work to do. The pace of school improvement is the key issue affecting our judgement.</p>