

Statement from Warrington Borough Council:

The council, in close partnership with its school leaders, has today (Sunday) agreed to defer primary schools extending their opening to more pupils by one week, until Monday 15 June.

Despite tireless work between the council and schools in the borough to prepare to welcome primary schoolchildren back to educational settings for Monday 8 June, a joint decision has this afternoon confirmed that arrangements will be put back by one week, to allow more time to consider the safe return of pupils.

This decision does not affect secondary schools, who are already planning wider reopening from Monday 15 June.

Cllr Matt Smith, Cabinet member for children's services, said: "This isn't a decision we've taken lightly, but it is a decision which balances the scientific evidence and advice with our own prudence and caution. Our decision to delay the wider reopening of our schools by a week also follows the regional consensus, with similar decisions being made by other councils and schools in the North West.

"Our schools have made excellent preparations and, following their own comprehensive risk assessments, will be equipped to open their doors, safely, to more pupils when the time comes. I can say that with absolute confidence, particularly given our schools have remained open for some of our most vulnerable children, and children of key workers.

"Our decision has been a difficult one to come to, especially given we want to see more children in schools. But, ultimately, we have agreed that the decision to delay the expansion of our primary school offer by a week, to the 15th, is the correct one – in line with our evidence-led, safety-first approach.

"We have had to carefully consider many different factors to come to our joint decision to delay, including the most recent information from Public Health England. This one week delay will provide us with a further opportunity to review recent scientific information, its impact, and implications locally.

"We will now be notifying head teachers of all affected primary schools and will continue to work with them on their arrangements and plans for expansion, in a week's time. We will also reconvene on Wednesday this week to review our joint position and make a further assessment."