Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Little Sprouts Early Learning Center

Provider No.: 51477

Address: 1003 23rd ST, Milford, IA, 51351

County: Dickinson

Director's Name: Amanda Schwery

On-Site Supervisor: Derek Schwery

Phone Number: 7123382349

E-Mail: littlesproutsmilford@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 05/28/2026

Licensing Period: 06/01/2025 to 06/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 07/29/2024

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

- [ ] PTO
- [X] Licensing Visit
- [ ] Drop In
- [ ] Administrative Change

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [X] Accrediation — Comments: NAYEC

Program Duration:

- [X] Year-Round
- [ ] School Year
- [ ] Summer Only

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	7:00 AM to 5:30 PM		
Tuesday	7:00 AM to 5:30 PM		
Wednesday	7:00 AM to 5:30 PM		
Thursday	7:00 AM to 5:30 PM		
Friday	7:00 AM to 5:30 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

- [X] Infant(0-<24 Months)
- [X] Toddler
- [X] PreSchool
- [X] School Age
- [ ] All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	45	26	26	37	134
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I completed an unannounced visit to Little Sprouts Learning Center on 05/27/26. Upon arrival, I spoke with the Director, Amanda Schwery. Ms. Schwery holds an elementary education degree and has 20 years of experience working with children. She also has a master's degree in early childhood and special needs. Little Sprouts Learning Center is located in a former strip mall that has been remodeled specifically for childcare purposes. I also met her husband, Derek Schwery, who is employed at the center. Derek has many years of experience working with children. The Schwerys expressed strong passion for the care and services they provide to the community.

Little Sprouts serves infants beginning at 6 weeks of age through school-age children. The center has five classrooms: an infant room with separate non-mobile (6 weeks–9 months) and mobile (9 months–2 years) areas, a 2-year-old room, a 3-year-old room, a pre-kindergarten room, and a school-age room. There are 89 children enrolled in the program, with 65 children present during my visit. The center operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Areas observed during the visit included classroom environments and activities, nutritional practices, health and safety practices, playground observations, field trip and transportation procedures, and an administrative review. The program uses the Experience Curriculum, which is a research-based early childhood curriculum designed to support developmental learning through hands-on activities.

The center has abundant natural light in each classroom and an open hallway area, contributing to a bright and welcoming environment. Each classroom includes a variety of learning areas for children to explore, including toys, books, cars, kitchen materials, puzzles, and blocks. There are several visual aids displayed throughout the rooms to support early literacy and word recognition. Children's artwork is prominently displayed, reflecting ongoing creative activities. Each classroom is

arranged with designated centers, including dramatic play areas, to support hands-on learning and developmental growth. I observed positive staff interactions with the children. Staff engaged children in activities in a manner that supported learning, and children appeared excited and enthusiastic as staff made the activities enjoyable and engaging. Scope and Sequence is also used in the curriculum. The program uses a scope and sequence that outlines the developmental skills children are expected to learn and the order in which those skills are introduced. This framework ensures that curriculum activities build on one another in a logical, age-appropriate progression and support children's growth across all developmental areas.

A daily schedule of activities was posted in each classroom. Throughout the visit, staff were observed engaging children in conversations, participating in play, offering reminders of classroom rules, singing songs, reading stories, and sitting with children during mealtimes. Staff interacted with children in a positive and supportive manner and actively assisted them in their activities.

Meals are prepared on site in the center's full kitchen, and the program follows Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines. The program rotates menus every two weeks, and menus were posted for families to review. The center incorporates organic foods into their meals and is working to eliminate artificial food dyes from all menu items, as they believe this supports overall health and wellness.

Medication is stored in a locked box or placed out of children's reach. Tables are sanitized prior to each meal. The first aid kit was fully stocked and adequate for treating minor injuries. Fire and tornado drills are documented monthly. The building uses electric heating, and radon testing has been completed with results within the normal range. Sanitary procedures were observed to be appropriate, and all program areas were clean and well maintained. Health and safety policies and procedures appear to be well established and consistently followed.

The center has a fenced-in playground adjacent to the building, with separate playground areas to ensure children play with peers of similar age groups. The playground includes climbing equipment with turf surfacing, all in good repair. The center has incorporated different colored turf to create activity zones, each containing sensory materials such as sand, water, and a dock feature. Additional thematic areas, including camping, fishing, and water play, are being added.

The center operates two 14-passenger vans used to transport children between the main center and the new site. The vans are equipped with seat belts designed for children ages 2 and older. The program provides transportation for school-age children and uses the vans for field trips and community activities.

A current goal for the program is to retain qualified staff. Ms. Schwery reported that staffing continues to be an ongoing challenge, largely due to pay rates that cannot compete with those offered by local school systems. She noted it is not financially feasible for the center to provide insurance or additional benefits, which further impacts staff retention.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

This center has several staff who have their CDA. The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is a nationally recognized certification that demonstrates a staff member's knowledge and competency in early childhood development. Staff who hold a CDA have completed formal training, demonstrated practical skills in the classroom, and met professional standards for working with young children. Having CDA-credentialed staff supports quality care by ensuring employees understand child development, developmentally appropriate practices, and effective strategies for guiding and teaching children.

The center takes additional steps in its meal planning by providing organic foods and preparing fresh purées for infants as well as meals for older children.

A continuum of care provides consistent, coordinated support for children and families throughout the day. This approach helps ensure smooth transitions between home, childcare, transportation, and school settings. Benefits include increased stability for children, better communication among caregivers and educators, and improved reliability for families who depend on consistent routines. Continuity of care also supports children's emotional security and helps maintain consistent expectations, which contributes to overall developmental success.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

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109.7(2): Center directors and all staff have the required contact hours of training.

4. Any corrective action plans, provisional license, and safety plans-steps to get into compliance

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management

I discussed with Amanda her oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance.

Amanda indicated that she has high expectations for her staff and communicates these expectations clearly. Staff are trained in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), an evidence-based framework that promotes positive behavior through consistent expectations, proactive strategies, and supportive teacher-child interactions.

Amanda is a hands-on director who models best practices in the classroom. Staff reported that if they feel frustrated or need a break, they are comfortable asking co-workers or Amanda for assistance. Cameras are installed in each room to support supervision and allow for ongoing observation.

A full license is recommended at this time.

At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

Date: 05/29/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Leann Steinhauer

Non-compliance with any of the mandated regulatory requirements listed above may lead to the cancellation or revocation of your Child Care License. Please take steps necessary to completely address each of the violations noted above.

Child Care Resource and Referral is an excellent resource for providers to access training options and support in your area. You can reach Child Care Resource and Referral at **https://iowaccrr.org**.