Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Little GEM Learning Center

Provider No.: 47824

Address: 430 16th AVE SW, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52404

County: Linn

Director's Name: Katie Meisterling

On-Site Supervisor: Katie Meisterling

Phone Number: 3192002999

E-Mail: ksmeisterling@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 01/08/2026

Licensing Period: 02/01/2025 to 02/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 01/03/2025

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Tuesday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Wednesday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Thursday	6:30 AM to 5:30 PM		
Friday	6:30 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	33	9	48	10	100
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

Little GEM operates the following two licensed programs in Linn County: Little GEM Learning Center (license #47824; opened 9/14/16) and Little GEM Learning Center - North (license #51891; opened 8/29/22). Specifically, this report pertains to Little GEM Learning Center.

Founding multi-site program owner and Little GEM Learning Center combined director/on-site supervisor is Katie Meisterling. Ms. Meisterling has a BA degree in elementary education and a MA degree in early childhood. Ms. Meisterling has experience working with children and participates in annual professional development.

On 1/8/2026, program space was observed. Little GEM Learning Center is located inside a leased historic building. Primary programming occurs in age defined classrooms. Most recently in summer 2024, a school-age summer camp experience was added to the program's offerings. The building has sufficient restrooms and handwashing sinks to accommodate enrolled children. The center has an on-site kitchen and outdoor play area. On the day of this monitoring visit, staff were observed warmly greeting families and children as they arrived for the day. Areas of study throughout the classrooms included winter and snowmen. Evidence of previous days' curriculum included nicely displayed child artwork (e.g. milestone handprint and footprint work). Curriculum on the day of the monitoring visit was observed to allow for a variety of play experiences that piqued child interest as well as encouraged social emotional growth, innovation and child choice. On 1/8/2026, staff were observed to be in ratio and actively engaged with the children. Children responded well to staff and appeared to be truly enjoying their day.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

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According to the family handbook, the mission of Little GEM Learning Center is "...to “Grow, Enrich, and Mentor” all children, staff, and families in our community in hopes that they will leave our program well equipped to achieve their full potential."

Little GEM has the following website: https://www.littlegemlearningcenter.com/. Little GEM also has a private social media page for enrolled family and current staff.

Founding original owner/director Ms. Meisterling is a local entrepreneur invested in the city of Cedar Rapids and surrounding community. Ms. Meisterling is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as her own program's policies and procedures. Ms. Meisterling is organized and has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a secure manner. Ms. Meisterling discussed having a good reliable core team of staff who have been with the program for 3 years or more. Ms. Meisterling indicated having one staff who participates in Teach and Wages.

As of 1/8/2026, Little GEM Learning Center was again found to be maintaining the required postings, maintaining parent-program information centers, utilizing technological communication resources, and offering family programming activities. Little Gem Learning Center's curriculum aligns with Iowa Early Learning Standards, incorporates preschool assessments, focuses on kindergarten readiness, and provides experiences in fine and gross motor skills, social/emotional skills, language/literacy learning and math/science exploration. Family activities have historically included holiday/seasonal celebrations, outdoor theater night, "Thanksgiving Feast", trunk-or-treat event, Christmas concert with visit from Santa, summer off-site field trips, and preschool graduation with food truck.

Each Little Gem Learning Center has policies and procedures including those for safety, daily health checks, hand washing, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. On the day of this monitoring visit, Ms. Meisterling discussed how staff help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day by following code required policies and procedures as well as their own policies and procedures. Ms. Meisterling also talked about how the program continues to have support from the building owner as to building-grounds conditions and repairs.

Each Little Gem Learning Center has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Little Gem programs have successfully navigated through the 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, air quality alerts (2023, 2025), and repeated technology outages (7/19/24 global technology outage, 10/10/2025 AWS outage, 10/29/2025 Microsoft outage).

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

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

109.11(8)c All centers: Annual inspection prior to heating season of all fuel-burning appliances to reduce risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and shall install one carbon monoxide detector on each floor that conforms to UL Standard 2034.
- Documentation of an annual all fuel burning appliance inspection was not found on the day of the monitoring visit. Ms. Meisterling reported an inspection had been completed but documentation not yet received due to needed repairs. It shall be noted that in some areas (e.g. 3yo classroom) a loud droning noise could be heard which is believed to be coming from the improperly functioning HVAC system. Please obtain and maintain written documentation from the fire marshal as to fire code requirements and the possible usage of space heaters.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

The restrooms shared among school-age and preschool children have open toilets with little to no stalls or partitions between the toilets as well as little overall privacy. Given the ages of children using these restrooms, privacy in the form of stalls or partitions with doors or curtains shall be installed. Licensing also strongly recommends consideration for increased privacy in the other child restrooms as well.

Remedy any observable chipping paint.

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The kitchen and side pantry area were dimly lit due to needing lightbulbs replaced. Remedy.

Ensure any space that is not currently being used is organized and cleaned prior to resuming usage.

Please provide a written response (e.g. including fuel inspection report and photographs) as to how all noted items have been fully resolved.

The program's license remains in full status. Thank you for the visit.

Date: 01/20/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons

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**.