Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: HMS Head Start

Provider No.: 30238

Address: 400 3rd St NW, Hartley, IA, 51346

County: Obrien

Director's Name: Angie Mitchell

On-Site Supervisor: Jessica Swenson

Phone Number: 7122980420

E-Mail: jedwards@udmo.com
dhelget@udmo.com

HHS Visit Date: 09/23/2026

Licensing Period: 10/01/2026 to 10/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 10/13/2023

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 3

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday		7:45 AM to 3:30 PM	
Tuesday		7:45 AM to 3:30 PM	
Wednesday		7:45 AM to 12:30 PM	
Thursday		7:45 AM to 3:30 PM	
Friday		7:45 AM to 3:30 PM	
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General			20		20
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I conducted an unannounced visit at the Head Start classroom on September 23, 2026. During the visit, I met with Dana Pennings, as the onsite supervisor Ms. Swanson was not working today. Ms. Swanson brings several years of experience in educational settings and holds both a two-year degree and a substitute teaching certification. Ms. Pennings has several years of experience and has worked and different daycare center sites.

This Head Start program, operated by Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc., functions as a preschool classroom within Hartley Elementary School. Staff files have already been reviewed for the current year and will be revisited later as needed. The classroom serves 14 children, all ages 3 and 4, and operates Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m. to 3:35 p.m. At the time of the visit, all 14 enrolled children were present. Entry to the classroom is gained through the school's main elementary door, which remains locked for safety. Staff meet families at the door for both drop-off and pick-up.

A full review of program practices was conducted, including classroom functioning, health and safety procedures, nutrition services, transportation and field trip protocols, and administrative compliance.

The classroom environment was thoughtfully arranged, with distinct learning areas that support varied types of play and instruction. Children had access to a wide selection of age-appropriate toys and materials. Activity centers included a sensory station, dramatic play area, and multiple interactive learning spaces. Classroom displays featured educational visuals such as colors, shapes, the five senses, world geography, a job chart, a daily schedule, children's artwork, and the alphabet. All materials appeared clean, well-maintained, and suited to the developmental needs of the group. The program implements Creative Curriculum GOLD, offering children hands-on learning opportunities across multiple domains.Creative Curriculum is a play-based approach that helps children learn by exploring, experimenting, and

discovering at their own pace. It encourages teachers to create inviting spaces where children can follow their interests—whether that's building, pretending, investigating sensory materials, or enjoying stories. Instead of rigid lessons, teachers guide learning by observing what children are curious about and weaving those interests into meaningful activities. The curriculum blends structure with flexibility, offering routines that help children feel secure while still giving them room to express themselves and grow. At its core, Creative Curriculum celebrates the wonder of early childhood and treats play as the foundation for real, lasting learning. During the observation period, children were actively engaged in circle time, dramatic play, sensory activities, and gross-motor exercise. I observed good transitions between activities and children were aware of the schedule and next activity.

Meal service followed the posted menu and met nutritional guidelines. Family-style mealtime routines were in practice, and children brushed their teeth following breakfast. Meals are provided through the school's kitchen and cafeteria, located directly across the hallway. Sanitary routines were consistently followed. Children demonstrated familiarity with hand-washing expectations and other hygiene procedures. Outdoor play occurs on a shared playground used by preschool-age children. The surface consists of rubber tiles alongside an expanded grassy section

Required safety and environmental measures were up to date: radon testing had been completed, the annual furnace inspection was available, fire and tornado drills were documented, and the first aid kit was fully stocked and current.

The center was clean, well-organized, and thoughtfully arranged, creating a calm and predictable environment. This level of organization helps children feel secure, allows them to move confidently through their daily routines, and supports smoother transitions, richer engagement, and more focused learning throughout their day.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

This Head Start program is located within the local elementary school, giving children seamless access to school-based services and bussing. Being embedded in the elementary environment strengthens continuity of care, supports smoother transitions, and helps children feel connected and secure as they move through their daily routines.

The center is certified at level 3 IQ4K. Being Level 3 in the IQ4K system means this center is going above basic licensing requirements to offer higher-quality care. It shows the program is committed to healthy meals, active play, trained staff, strong family communication, and a learning environment that supports children's growth. For families, Level 3 signals a program that is well-organized, thoughtful, and focused on providing a safe, supportive, and enriching experience for young children.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.9(2)d: All files contain sufficient information and authorization to allow the center to secure emergency medical and dental services at any time child is in center's care.

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

Dana shared that this classroom typically maintains one additional staff member beyond the required ratio, which strengthens supervision and allows for more meaningful, individualized interactions with children. With more adults

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available, staff can be fully present and responsive, offering support before behaviors escalate and creating a calmer, more connected classroom environment.
Staff are trained in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), an approach that focuses on teaching children positive behaviors rather than simply reacting to challenging ones. PBIS encourages staff to model kindness, provide clear expectations, and reinforce skills that help children navigate their day successfully. In this classroom, it means teachers spend time helping children understand routines, practice problem-solving, and build confidence in their own choices.
One strength Dana highlighted is the open communication among staff. If a teacher starts to feel overwhelmed or frustrated, they feel comfortable speaking up and asking a colleague to step in. This supportive culture helps maintain consistency, reduces stress, and ultimately benefits the children by ensuring they are surrounded by calm, regulated adults. The team also uses prepared language prompts to help with redirection. These sample phrases give staff quick, positive ways to guide children when they need help refocusing or managing emotions—for example, acknowledging feelings, offering choices, or gently reminding them of expectations. Having these tools ready makes redirection smoother, more respectful, and more effective for young learners.

Please send me an email by 11/30/26 confirming that all aspects below standards have been corrected.

A full license is recommended at this time.

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

Please ensure all staff members professional development has been entered into IPOWER .

Date: 09/23/2026

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**.