Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: South Winneshiek Early Childhood Program

Provider No.: 18232

Address: 208 E Brooks ST, Ossian, IA, 52161

County: Winneshiek

Director's Name: Donna Blong

On-Site Supervisor: Lisa Nelson

Phone Number: 5635329365

E-Mail: dblong@swinn.k12.ia.us

HHS Visit Date: 01/12/2026

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

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 01/05/2026

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday		7:40 AM to 3:05 PM	
Tuesday		7:40 AM to 3:05 PM	
Wednesday		7:40 AM to 3:05 PM	
Thursday		7:40 AM to 3:05 PM	
Friday			
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	0	0	88	0	88
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

On 01/12/26 I made an unannounced off year licensing visit to South Winneshiek Early Childhood in Ossian. I met with Donna Blong, the lead teacher in the three-year-old room (EC 1) and director. She has been with the program since August 1997 and has her paraeducator certificate, a diploma in early childhood and her CDA. Lisa Nelson is an assistant in Ms. Blong's room and the on-site supervisor. She has an AA in early childhood and an AA in education and her paraeducator certificate. She has previous experience of working in childcare. She has been with the program since August 2015.

Victoria "Torie" Young is the lead teacher in the second Early Childhood (EC 2) room. She has her paraeducator certificate. Gretchen Wenthold is the lead teacher in the Jumpstart 1 (JS 1) room and Ashley Izer is her assistant. Ms. Izer has her paraeducator certificate. Ericka Baumler is a para in Jumpstart 1 that works one on one with a student. Emily Kullen is the lead teacher in the Jumpstart 2 (JS 2) room. Carrie Hovey is the assistant in the room and she has her paraeducator certificate. Jordan Reisner is the para in the Jumpstart 2 room that works one on one with a student. Both Jumpstart rooms are under the voluntary four-year-old preschool grant. Ms. Wenthold and Ms. Kullen have a BA in early childhood education.

The program is in South Winneshiek Elementary. Visitors must sign in at the office. The program operates from 7:40 am until 3:05 pm Monday through Thursday. The program serves children who are three through five years old. The program had an IQ4K level 4 that expired on 09/30/25. She is in the process of renewing IQ4K for a level 4. There are currently 57 children enrolled.

The program operates out of four classrooms. Windows provide natural lighting. The rooms are decorated with pictures of the children and their families, the children's art projects, and posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as

the alphabet, shapes, colors and numbers. The children's birthdays were posted. There is an area for circle time in each room.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, Ipads, art, dramatic play, listening, writing, math, science/discovery, woodworking, sensory table and music. Centers were arranged in a manner that allowed easy movement between activities, but it also allowed for clear supervision by staff members. Materials were in good condition. The materials are located at child level, so they are easily accessible to the children.

There are two bathrooms located off the early childhood classroom and two bathrooms in a space between the two Jumpstart classrooms. This is also the area where the children's cubbies are located. Each bathroom has one sink and one toilet. There is also a sink located in each of the classrooms. Handwashing procedures were posted in all locations. There is a Koala Kare changing table attached to the wall in one of the bathrooms and diaper changing procedures were posted. There are additional bathrooms in the school.

Cots are used to nap in the two Early Childhood classrooms and mats are used to nap in the two Jumpstart classrooms.

The early childhood classrooms use a variety of resources to develop lesson plans. Ms. Blong and Ms. Young primarily use Creative Curriculum, and they complete the GOLD assessments. They also use Jolly Phonics, Handwriting Without Tears and Heggerty Phonemic Awareness tools. The Jumpstart classrooms use Creative Curriculum and GOLD assessments are completed on all the children. They use Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, Jolly Phonics, and Handwriting Without Tears as additional resources. Activities are planned around studies. The length of the study depends on the topic and the children's interest level. All the rooms use the Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) program and Second Step in their classrooms. The program partners with Keystone AEA to work with identified children. The children also participate in four specials each week. The specials are the school library, gym, music teacher and guidance counselor. A smart projector is in each room.

There was a phone with emergency numbers posted in both Early Childhood classrooms. The emergency numbers were not posted in the Jumpstart 1and Jumpstart 2 classrooms. Please post these near the phones. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by all the main program doors and outdoor exits in all four rooms. A daily schedule was posted for each room and lesson plans were available for review in each classroom.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. The radon test was completed in December 2024 and is good for five years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector is located near the doors in all four rooms. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 01/05/26.

The school participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines are followed. The children receive breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Breakfast and lunch are purchased through the school or children can bring their own lunch. The early childhood children eat breakfast in the cafeteria and lunch and snack in their classroom. The Jumpstart children eat breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria and snack in the classroom. Lunch is delivered to the early childhood rooms and staff members serve the children in already dished out trays. Dishes are returned to the cafeteria to be washed. The afternoon snack is provided by parents in all classrooms. The parents buy milk tickets. Disposable products are used for snack. Snacks are recorded on a calendar in each room. Menus are posted in the rooms. Food items were stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

Bleach and water are used to sanitize the food tables in the rooms. The bleach and water bottles were clearly labeled.

There is a first aid kit in each classroom.

There is a fenced in playground for the children and turf is used for surface cushioning. There is climbing equipment as well as other activities for the children to play with. The children also use the large grassy space for the children. The program had fundraisers and wrote grants to install new safety handrails on the playground equipment, as well as new steps and a slide. They replaced the rubber tiles with turf.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside each classroom. The mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously hung. A no-smoking sign was posted at the

entrance.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The lead teachers in the two Jumpstart classrooms have a BA in early childhood education. The other teachers have paraeducator certificates.

The children participate in four specials each week. The specials are the school library, gym, music teacher and guidance counselor.

Ms. Blong is renewing her IQ4K certificate for a level 4.

The Jumpstart 1 and 2 rooms are both part of the voluntary four-year-old preschool grant. These two rooms use the Seesaw app to communicate with families. All the rooms send parents emails as needed, prepare weekly newsletters and monthly activity calendars. Staff members talk with parents at the end of the school day. Parents are notified of any changes.

The program offers parent/teacher conferences in November and February. The lead teachers complete Gold Assessments on the children.

The teachers have implemented Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) training techniques in their classroom. This is evident in how they work with the children.

The children can ride the school bus to and from preschool if they reside on the bus route.
EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS:
ACCOMPLISHMENTS:
EC 1-A second EC classroom has been added to the program and Ms. Blong is working closely with Ms. Young to make her year as successful as possible. They were able to make improvements to the playground.

EC 2-Ms. Young has supported a student in becoming more comfortable and engaged in the school environment. The child has shown significant growth and is actively participating in classroom activities and interacting with peers. He communicates his needs. The progress reflects the positive relationship built, the consistent support provided, and the strategies implemented to help him feel secure, included and ready to learn.

STRENGTHS:
EC 1-Working as a team and making sure both teachers are involved in making classroom decisions. Teachers ae consistent and students know what to expect. They ae committed to the students and want them to have a positive start to their education.

EC 2-Ms. Young collaborates with Ms. Blong and Ms. Nelson to function as a cohesive and supportive team across both classrooms. Through open communication, shared planning, and a unified approach to student needs, they can strengthen instructional practices, ensure consistency in expectations, and provide a more structured and supportive learning environment for all students. The collaborative teamwork allows us to effectively address individual student needs, streamline classroom routines, and maintain a positive, well-coordinated atmosphere throughout both rooms.

SUCCESS STORY:
EC 1-Teachers have worked closely with a child and his family on potty training. He has made significant strides. The child has very few accidents and has been walking to the bathroom on his own.

EC 2-There was a child who started the school year and could not speak English. He cried often, hung on to Ms. Young's hand tightly and did not leave her side. Slowly and gently with patience and encouragement the child began to feel safe. His bravery showed in small steps. The transformation to now is inspiring. He started speaking English and participating in activities. He arrives at school with a big smile. Watching him blossom has been an incredible privilege. His journey is a reminder of the power of patience, connection, and a supportive environment.

JUMPSTART CLASSROOMS:
ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

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JS 1-Students have become noticeably more responsible and independent compared to the beginning of the year. They now come into the classroom and complete their routines without direction from teachers. Their problem solving skills have also grown; they are able to address challenges and take care of their needs with less teacher support. Most students can now get themselves ready for recess independently. They are better able to sit on the carpet and actively listen to stories and lessons than they were earlier in the year.

JS 2-It is the second year of Ms. Kullen's master's program and she states it has truly strengthened her practice. She was reminded that one of the most valuable things a teacher can do is continue to learn-whether its new strategies, updated research, or better ways to support diverse learners. Staying current with best practices has improved her instruction and she is proud that despite the workload, she has remained committed to her classroom and her students.

STRENGTHS:
JS 1-Teachers collaborate and plan effectively as a team, maintaining open and clear communication. The daily schedule is consistent and includes all required components, such as large group, small group, quiet time, and large motor activities. One of the special education students has a dedicated 1:1 paraeducator who supports her needs throughout the day, allowing both the teacher and paraeducator to provide strong support to the rest of the class during large group lessons and activities.

JS 2-Ms. Kullen states she works hard to create a welcoming, positive environment each day. She makes it a priority to speak to students with kindness, build genuine relationships, and learn what makes each child feel seen and supported. The class responds incredibly well to consistent, predictable routines and she takes pride in maintaining the structure throughout the day. This combination of warmth and consistency has helped students feel safe and ready to learn.

SUCCESS STORY:
JS 1-Unfortunately, I do not think the second page with Ms. Wenthold's success story was copied for me.

JS 2-There was a defiant student and the behaviors made it difficult for him to participate meaningfully in the day. Over time, by focusing on ignoring behaviors when appropriate and using enforceable statements to emphasize what adults do, rather than giving directives he might resist, they have seen significant process. He still has moments of testing limits but recovers more quickly and demonstrates more flexibility. It has been incredibly rewarding to have a clear, consistent plan in place and to see him begin to respond in more positive ways.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.11(6)-Telephone
Post emergency numbers with the program's address and phone number near the phones in the JS1 and JS2 rooms.

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

N/A

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is issued for the remainder of the licensing period. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

The lead staff members in each room appear to have a great working relationship with the assistants in their rooms. They know what is expected of each other and do their tasks without being asked. The EC2 classroom only has one teacher but she has access to the other teachers if she needs assistance. Staff members had great interaction with the children. They were singing and dancing with the children in one room, they were working on cutting and doing an art project in one room, they were completing circle time in one room and they were making homemade snow using baking soda and conditioner in a room. The children were enjoying themselves in all the room. Staff members have a great schedule and routine in the classrooms. They are enthusiastic and clearly enjoy what they do. They provide the children with praise and encouragement. They provided the children with handwashing reminders. They kept the children occupied during transitions. There are several visual cues in the room to assist the children.

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I love that each year the teachers share accomplishments, strengths, weaknesses and success stories with me. I love reading about everything they are doing and working on.

Date: 01/23/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost

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**.