Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Bluff's Little Thinkers

Provider No.: 42234

Address: 306 1ST ST STE 3, Sergeant Bluff, IA, 51054

County: Woodbury

Director's Name: Kelsey Andersen

On-Site Supervisor: Kayla Schroeder

Phone Number: 7124905620

E-Mail: kelseyandersenteach@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 12/01/2025

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

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 02/27/2025

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:

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

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

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	24	25	23		72
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I completed an unannounced licensing visit to Bluff's Little Thinkers on 12/01/25 and spoke with director Kelsey Andersen and onsite Kayla Schroeder. Kelsey has many years of experience working with children and is NAC accredited. The National Administrator Credential (NAC) is a nationally recognized certification for childcare directors and administrators. It involves 45 hours of training focused on leadership, staff management, program development, and regulatory compliance. Being NAC certified shows a strong commitment to professional excellence and ensures that administrators are well-equipped to lead high-quality early childhood programs. Ms. Anderson has also shared her expertise by mentoring and supporting other childcare directors. She further has a degree in childcare supervision and early childhood development.

Bluff's Little Thinkers was built specifically for childcare. The center consists of five areas including an infant room, one year old room, transition room, three-year-old room and a preschool room. The center provides services for children infants to pre-school age. The program operates hours Monday through Friday 6:30amto 5:30 pm. The center follows the Sgt. Bluff School district when it pertains to weather. There are 67 children enrolled in the program. At the time of the visit there were 61 children present.

All areas of the program were observed. These areas observed consisted of classroom observations and activities, nutritional practices, health and safety practices, field trip and transportation practices, and administrative review.

The center has great collaboration with the local elementary school who utilizes the center's top of the line sensory room. The shared sensory room provides a calming, multi-sensory environment that supports children’s emotional and developmental needs. It helps children regulate their emotions, reduce anxiety, and improve focus—especially beneficial for those with sensory processing challenges or developmental disorders. Through interactive play and soothing stimuli like soft

lighting and textures, children develop self-regulation, communication, and problem-solving skills. This space promotes inclusion and enhances learning readiness for all children, not just those with special needs.

The center utilizes the Creative Curriculum, a research-based, comprehensive early childhood program that supports the development of the whole child. Through hands-on, project-based learning, it fosters creativity, confidence, and critical thinking in a developmentally appropriate way. The curriculum is designed to be flexible and responsive, allowing teachers to tailor learning experiences to meet the unique needs of each child.

To monitor and support developmental progress, the center also implements Teaching Strategies GOLD, an observation-based assessment system. GOLD allows educators to capture real-time insights into each child's growth across multiple domains, including social-emotional, cognitive, physical, and language development. This system ensures that instruction is individualized and aligned with early learning standards, while also strengthening communication with families through accessible, meaningful progress reports.

The center fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment by displaying photos of children with their families, helping to create a sense of belonging and connection. In addition, staff photos are accompanied by brief bios, allowing families to get to know the educators and support staff who care for their children each day. This thoughtful approach strengthens relationships, builds trust, and supports a strong sense of community within the center.

Staff use Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to encourage positive behavior and create a consistent, nurturing environment. Expectations are clearly taught and reinforced through routines, modeling, and praise. When children demonstrate appropriate behavior, staff acknowledge it with positive feedback. For those needing extra support, staff use targeted strategies to guide behavior in a supportive way. This approach helps prevent challenging behaviors and promotes social-emotional growth for all children.

Classroom centers are thoughtfully arranged to support a variety of learning experiences, including dramatic play, literacy, math, science, and art. Children are assigned to small groups and rotate through the centers using a timer system, which helps maintain structure and ensures each child has the opportunity to engage in all areas. This organized approach promotes cooperative play, independence, and smooth transitions throughout the day.

The environment is enriched with visual aids and colorful displays, including the alphabet, numbers, colors, and a job chart for children. Daily schedules, monthly menus, and activity plans are clearly posted. Safety and compliance are prioritized through regular fire and tornado drills, playground and first aid kit inspections, as well as fuel-burning appliance checks, radon testing, and fire inspections.

Meals are prepared onsite in a kitchen that is securely inaccessible to children. Breakfast and snacks are provided, and the center follows the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines to ensure all meals meet nutritional standards. Menus are posted and reflect balanced, age-appropriate options. Proper food storage practices were observed, including a clean refrigerator maintained at the correct temperature and a well-organized pantry for additional storage. The center uses a commercial dishwasher with a sanitizer to ensure thorough sanitation.

The center is clean, well-organized, and maintained to high standards of hygiene. Proper handwashing procedures were observed, along with appropriate and sanitary diaper-changing practices. If needed medication is stored appropriately.

The center features two fenced-in playgrounds—one designated for younger children and another for older age groups. In the fall of 2021, the playgrounds were updated to enhance safety and functionality. The younger children's area includes turf surfacing for added cushioning, while the older children's area features turf around the play structure. New shade structures have also been installed to provide sun protection.

The center no longer provides transportation.

The center has set a goal to advance from an IQ4K Level 3 to Level 4, demonstrating a commitment to continuous quality improvement. Additionally, the center aims to incorporate regular professional development days to support ongoing staff training and growth.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

This center serves as a strong example of the Continuum of Care model, thanks to its excellent working relationship with the local school district. The collaboration supports smooth transitions for children and reinforces consistent care and developmental support across settings. Families benefit from this partnership through improved communication between early childhood educators and school staff, greater alignment in expectations and routines, and increased confidence that their children are receiving coordinated, high-quality care that supports school readiness.

The center's staff are actively engaged with children throughout the day, participating in games, learning activities, and play-based interactions. Their hands-on involvement fosters strong relationships, supports social-emotional development, and creates a warm, responsive environment where children feel supported and encouraged to explore and learn.

Kelsey demonstrates a strong commitment to professional growth—not only for herself, but also for her staff and the broader field of early childhood education. Her dedication is evident in her support for ongoing training opportunities, reflective practices, and her efforts to elevate the quality of care and education within the center.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

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

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is recommended at this time.

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

Date: 12/01/2025

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**.