Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: St Mary's Little Hawks Preschool

Provider No.: 45840

Address: 321 Fulton ST, Remsen, IA, 51050

County: Plymouth

Director's Name: Abby Arens

On-Site Supervisor:

Phone Number: 7127861160

E-Mail: arensa@rsmschools.org

HHS Visit Date: 10/29/2026

Licensing Period: 11/01/2025 to 11/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 10/09/2021

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 1

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday		8:00 AM to 3:30 PM	
Tuesday		8:00 AM to 3:30 PM	
Wednesday		8:00 AM to 3:30 PM	
Thursday		8:00 AM to 3:30 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			33		33
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I completed an unannounced visit to this center on 10/29/26 and met with Director Abby Arens. Ms. Arens has several years of experience working with preschool-aged children and has completed numerous training courses to prepare her for her role as director.

St. Mary's Little Hawks Preschool is located within St. Mary's School in Remsen. The program operates out of two classrooms on the first floor: a four-year-old preschool classroom and a three-year-old preschool classroom. Preschool hours are Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. during the school year. Twice per month, the program dismisses at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesdays to allow for staff professional development. At the time of my visit, there were 19 children in attendance. The program currently has 21 children enrolled.

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 maintains a clean environment, including regular cleaning of toys used by children. A daily schedule of activities was clearly posted in the classroom. Throughout the room, displays included colors, shapes, the five senses, a globe, a picture schedule, a job chart, children's artwork, and the alphabet. Staff were observed actively engaging with children in a variety of learning activities, providing guidance, encouragement, and meaningful conversation throughout the visit. During the observation, children participated in pumpkin carving and other Halloween-themed activities. The activities were age-appropriate and provided opportunities for hands-on learning, social interaction, and creative expression. The school recently purchased the Creative Curriculum and GOLD assessment system. These tools support teachers in planning developmentally appropriate learning experiences and tracking children's progress across multiple developmental

domains, including social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and mathematics skills. The curriculum promotes individualized instruction and ongoing assessment to help ensure children are meeting developmental milestones and kindergarten readiness goals. The schedule is posted in the room.

Lunch is provided through the high school. Children walk through the lunch line and receive their meals in the same manner as students in a typical school setting. The preschool also provides morning and afternoon snacks to ensure children have access to nutritious food throughout the day. In the event of inclement weather, meals are delivered to the elementary school.
Meals and snacks are nutritious and meet Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines. Menus were posted and readily available for review. Menus are also published on the school's website for families to access. Staff have completed ServSafe training. ServSafe is a nationally recognized food safety and sanitation program that provides training on safe food handling, food storage, prevention of foodborne illness, personal hygiene, cleaning and sanitizing procedures, and proper food service practices. This training helps ensure that meals and snacks are prepared, stored, and served in a safe manner for children. They currently do not administer medications.

The annual heating inspection had been completed, and documentation was available for review. The center also completed radon testing, and the results were within normal limits. The first aid kit is currently being updated to ensure adequate supplies are available to address minor injuries and illnesses. A working carbon monoxide detector was present, and the center was observed to follow appropriate cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Documentation indicated that fire and tornado drills were conducted as required and were up to date. Playground inspections had not been documented at the time of the visit. The outdoor play area is located adjacent to the school and includes climbing equipment and slides. Rubber mulch is used as protective surfacing around the equipment to help reduce the risk of injury from falls. St. Mary's Elementary School is responsible for maintaining the playground and equipment. Adequate shade was available within the outdoor play area for children during outdoor activities.

The center participates in a variety of field trips throughout the year to enhance children's learning experiences. Parents are utilized to assist with transportation, and record checks are completed on drivers prior to transporting children. These procedures help ensure children are transported safely and in accordance with program requirements.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

St. Mary's Little Hawks Preschool will be relocating to a newly constructed building in January. During the visit, I was given the opportunity to observe the new classrooms and learning spaces. The new facility will provide an updated environment designed to support the educational and developmental needs of young children. The additional space, modern features, and improved learning environment will enhance opportunities for both children and staff.

The investment in a new preschool facility demonstrates a strong commitment to early childhood education and reflects the value the community places on supporting young learners and their families. Access to a modern, well-designed educational setting can promote student engagement, safety, and school readiness while creating a welcoming environment for families. The new building will be a positive asset for the Remsen community and will help ensure that high-quality preschool services remain available for years to come.

St. Mary's Little Hawks Preschool is currently participating in Iowa's Quality for Kids (IQ4K®) program at Level 1. Participation in IQ4K demonstrates the program's commitment to continuous quality improvement and providing a positive learning environment for children. Through the program, the preschool engages in ongoing efforts to strengthen educational practices, support staff development, and enhance outcomes for children and families.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.9(2)a-c: All files contain sufficient information to allow the center to contact the parent or emergency contact at any time child is in center’s care as well as who can pick up the child as authorized by the parent.

109.11(2)a: The center will provide sufficient and safe indoor play equipment, materials, and furniture. It must meet the developmental, activity and special needs of the children. There are unsafe edges and broken child furniture. This needs to be addressed.

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109.11(4)b: Record of monthly inspections of outdoor recreation area and equipment shall be kept.

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

Abby indicated that staff are very aware of their own stress levels and are proactive in recognizing signs of frustration. She reported that staff communicate openly with one another and feel comfortable asking for assistance or taking a break when needed. This team-based approach helps promote a positive work environment and supports staff in responding to children's needs in a calm, patient, and professional manner.

The program needs to email consultant by 12/31/26 confirming that the aspects which fall 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.

Date: 10/29/2026

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**.