Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Creative Kids Company - Shellsburg

Provider No.: 52176

Address: 203 Cottage ST, Shellsburg, IA, 52332

County: Benton

Director's Name: Kelsey Fish & Meredith Zuspann

On-Site Supervisor: Mindy Kies

Phone Number: 3192140127

E-Mail: creative.kids.shellsburg@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 05/26/2026

Licensing Period: 06/01/2026 to 06/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 05/13/2024

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	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	0	0	21	75	96
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

On 05/26/26 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Creative Kids Company in Shellsburg. I primarily met with Mindy Kies, the on-site supervisor. She started with the program in June 2024. I briefly met with Meredith Zuspann and Kelsey Fish, the owners and directors of the program. They took over ownership on 05/27/23 and started caring for children on 06/01/23. Ms. Fish has a BA in elementary education and an MA in educational leadership. She has an expired administrator's license. She was an elementary teacher for ten years and then an induction coach for Grant Wood AEA for four years. Ms. Zuspann has a BA in education for K-8 with an endorsement in special education and a MA in Teaching in the Reading Specialist program. She has been employed as an elementary teacher since August 2009. The program employs fourteen staff members.

Ms. Fish and Ms. Zuspann are also the owners and directors of Creative Kids Company-Vinton. They started at the Vinton location on 06/03/24.

The program is in Shellsburg Elementary School. The program started in 2015 under the previous ownership. The center is a for profit program that operates year-round, Monday through Friday from 6:00 am until 6:00 pm, all day during planned no-school days, weather closures and the summer. They serve preschool and school-aged children. During school the school age program operates from 6:00-7:30 am and 3:30-6:00 pm. The program provides childcare for preschool children all day during the school year. There are currently 48 children enrolled.

The program primarily operates out of the school cafeteria and one classroom. The cafeteria is an open space that allows for free play and organized activities. The classroom provides a smaller environment for the younger children. An inspection of each room was completed. Natural lighting is used. They also use the outside playground area and gym. The

centers observed include arts and crafts, library, blocks/Legos, games, table toys, puzzles, math, science, dramatic play/dolls, transportation and magnets. Centers are stored in cabinets inside the cafeteria and there are several shelves of activities in the classroom. There is also a large storage cabinet in another area of the school that has several supplies.

The classroom for preschool children (classroom 47) was approved by the fire marshal on 05/13/24. The capacity of the room is 21 children.

The children use two bathrooms in the cafeteria. The girl's bathroom has three toilets and the boy's bathroom has one toilet and two urinals. There are three sinks outside of the bathrooms. Handwashing procedures were posted. The preschool children use two bathrooms across from their room. The girl's bathroom has five toilets and three sinks and the boy's bathroom has two toilets, three urinals and two sinks. Handwashing procedures were posted in both locations. There are additional bathrooms located in the school. There is a sink in the preschool classroom and procedures were posted.

Cots are used to nap for the preschool children.

Staff members use personal cell phones for emergencies and emergency numbers were posted with the program's address and phone number on the posting. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by the main program doors and outside exits. A daily schedule was posted.

During the summer months of operation, the program runs a curriculum with themes and activities. They also participate in field trips during the summer months.

The program uses the Playground app to communicate with parents and they keep electronic staff and children files in the app. Staff members also communicate with one another using the app.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. There were no fire or tornado drills practices from October 2025 through February 2026. In addition, the school age children did not practice a fire drill in April 2026. Both the preschool and school age children must practice both fire and tornado drills every month during the licensing hours of operation. For the preschool children make sure you are doing the drills at various times, including while they are in school and before and after school. Not practicing monthly fire and tornado drills is a serious offense and must be corrected. Ms. Kies states she recently became aware of this.

I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in January 2025 and must be repeated in five years. The results were within EPA guidelines. A fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector is present and located on the west wall in the cafeteria and in the preschool room. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 05/13/24.

The program is not on the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) but follows the guidelines. During the school year the program provides an afternoon snack for the school age children. When there is no school during the school year the program provides a morning and afternoon snack and the children `bring a lunch from home. During the summer months, the childcare program provides the school age children with an afternoon snack and the preschool children receive a morning and afternoon snack. They use the free breakfast and summer lunch program run at the school for all children. When the free lunch is not running, families can provide their own lunch from home or the program will make a cold lunch for the children. The program uses a two week rotation of menus for snacks. Menus were available for review.

For the preschool children during the school year, the program provides breakfast, lunch and a morning and afternoon snack. They receive breakfast and lunch from the school. The children eat in their classroom. Menus were available for review.

The program has use of a refrigerator in the school kitchen and a thermometer was present. Disposable products are used for snacks. Food items on hand were stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

The program uses Member's Mark Sanitizer to sanitize the food tables.

The school age playground uses woodchips for fall surfacing under most of the equipment. There is a rope climber that uses a poured in place fall surfacing. There is also a concrete area for the children. There are multiple pieces of climbing equipment that have slides and other activities. There are rings, monkey bars, steppingstones, a balance beam and a

climbing wall. There are multiple sets of swings. Benches and picnic tables are available for the children to rest.

The preschool playground has woodchips for fall surfacing. There is a piece of climbing equipment with slides, a climbing wall, swings, a stationary boat, a playhouse, and a sandbox. There are picnic tables and a bench for the children to rest. There is a small grassy area. The school will put up a tarp for shade.

In the gym, the school allows them to use their materials.

The parent information is in the entrance of the cafeteria and the entrance of the classroom. The mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously posted. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance.

Staff and children's files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed six children files. Files must contain emergency contact information for the doctor and dentist of each child. The doctor's and dentist's name, phone number and complete street address must be provided. One file did not provide any doctor or dental emergency contact information. This child also did not have a physical. This will not be cited because there was not a pattern of disregard

I reviewed two staff files. One staff member had a transgression on their record checks. You are required to send all "hits" in to Des Moines and you must receive permission for this employee to work in childcare.

I reviewed policy and procedures, staff and parent handbooks. The necessary written emergency procedures and policies were present. Emergency Preparedness Plans have been completed.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Ms. Fish and Ms. Zuspann have created an environment for the children and staff members that is filled with fun activities. They are very organized. They are committed to the program and providing a safe environment for the children.

Staff members were observed to be actively engaged with the children in activities. They were playing games with the children and assisted with crafts. They took the children outside to enjoy the beautiful weather. Staff members modeled good manners. They maintained positive conversation with the children and offered them choices. They used positive redirection with the children when necessary. There was good communication between staff members. I observed staff members count children as hey wen outside. The children appeared to enjoy their time at the center.

There are posters with the shift expectations of duties for staff members at different times during the hours of operation. There is a QR code on each poster which provides more detailed instructions.

Ms. Kies states she loves how the program has partnerships in the community. They have guest speakers visit.

Once each week on the school's early out day, the program rotates between having a presenter, doing a STEM activity, making a craft or watching a movie.

Ms. Kies states the program closes three times each school year for staff professional development days. She states it is focused more on internal training and staff members still use I-Power for on-going training hours.

Ms. Kies states they have great communication with parents through the Playground app. She states at check-in and at check-out the parents must scan a staff member's badge, so this allows personal interaction with parents and time to talk and ask questions.

Ms. Kies states they combine the preschool and school age children for activities on occasion to foster relationships and it introduces the pre-K children to large groups and to the school age program that they will join the following year.

Ms. Kies states they program is interactive with community programs, such as the library program.

Ms. Kies states the program has a good working relationship with the school district.

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Ms. Kies states they offer childcare before and after school, on no-school days, during the summer and on most inclement weather days.

Ms. Kies states the staff members work well together. She states if a staff member from out of town cannot make it in due to bad weather, they will contact a staff member who lives in town and they will cover shifts.

Ms. Kies states the program is flexible.

Ms. Kies states the full time staff members receive at least monthly coaching.

Ms. Kies states if a staff member needs more support they will complete performance plans for them.

They have a fun summer planned for the children that includes several field trips, park days, swim days and water days. They use a school bus for transportation.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.9(1)a: All files contain:Copy of a department criminal history record check form or any other permission form approved by Department of Public Safety for conducting an Iowa or national criminal history record checkCopy of a request for child abuse information form, when applicable.Copies of results of Iowa record checks conducted through the SING for review by the department upon request.Copies of national criminal history check results.Any department issued documents sent to the center related to a record check, regardless of findings.
An administrative change is being made to remove Holli Lewis as an on-site supervisor for this site. She remains the OSS at the Vinton site.

109.10(13)b: Emergency instructions, phone numbers, and diagrams for fire, tornado, and flood shall be visibly posted and documented at least once a month for fire and tornado. Records shall be maintained for current and previous year.
There were no fire or tornado drills practices from October 2025 through February 2026. In addition, the school age children did not practice a fire drill in April 2026. Both the preschool and school age children must practice both fire and tornado drills every month during the licensing hours of operation. Not practicing monthly fire and tornado drills is a serious offense and must be corrected. Ms. Kies states she recently became aware of this.

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. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

An administrative change is being made to remove Holli Lewis as an on-site supervisor for this site. She remains the OSS at the Vinton site.

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management:
I discussed with Ms. Kies her oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance. Ms. Kies states they have an explicit policy that explains how to deal with children's behaviors. They have orientation on the policy at the beginning of the school year. Ms. Kies administration models what they expect from staff members. She states the most physical contact they have with a child is to place their hand on the child's back to guide them if necessary. She states they realize at times things can become worse by getting closer to a child who is spiraling. Ms. Kies, if administrators observe a staff member getting frustrated, they will step in to help and to de-escalate the situation. They try to do as much training as possible. They adjust the policy to meet the needs they are facing.

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Ms. Kies states she and Holli Lewis (the OSS at the Vinton site) are very “hands on”. Ms. Lewis started a “Coaches Corner” for staff members in the Playground app. She will post educational videos on how to handle difficult situations. They are very helpful. Ms. Kies and Ms. Lewis provide weekly updates, tips and tricks when it comes to dealing with children with behaviors. For example, some children can be redirected by giving them a daily job in the program.

Ms. Kies states they monitor this by being present. Staff members are given educational videos and they must complete a Google form and provide their biggest take away from the video. They are always monitoring staff members and they are available for help or questions.

Ms. Kies states that Ms. Zuspann created a “Behavior Document Hub” that provides statistics on observed behaviors and staff who reported it. They expect staff members to follow the 5:1 rule; they must give five positive interactions or “Kudos” to every one redirection.

Date: 05/29/2026

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**.