Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: St Joseph Childcare

Provider No.: 25092

Address: 1430 14th St, Marion, IA, 52302

County: Linn

Director's Name: Amy Diercks

On-Site Supervisor: Amy Diercks

Phone Number: 3193776348

E-Mail: amy.diercks@crxcs.org
pbrady@sjcsmarion.org

HHS Visit Date: 04/29/2026

Licensing Period: 05/01/2026 to 05/01/2028

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:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	6:30 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			80	48	128
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

Xavier Catholic Schools owns and operates several learning centers throughout the community. Specifically, this license pertains to St. Joseph Childcare which is located inside St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School. St. Joseph Childcare is part of the Xavier Catholic School System which is accredited by the Iowa Department of Education and part of the Archdiocese of Dubuque. St. Joseph Childcare has been in operation for several years. St. Joseph operates year-round, M-F 6:30am-6:00pm. This license includes childcare for children age 3yo through school age, a three-year-old preschool program and four-year-old preschool program. Total enrolled and attending children was reported to be 83 on 4/29/2026.

Xavier Catholic Schools learning centers multi-site executive director is Connie Schulte. Ms. Schulte has been in this position since July 2024. Ms. Schulte has extensive director experience, has experience working with children and participates in professional development. Specific director of St. Joseph Childcare is Amy Diercks. Ms. Diercks has been in the director role since July 2023. Ms. Diercks has a BS degree in Biology/Doctor of Chiropractic, has experience working with childcare and participates in professional development.

On 4/29/2026, program space was observed. Primary programming occurs in age defined spaces and classrooms. All children have some access to an indoor school gymnasium and outdoor school play areas. Sufficient restrooms including hand washing sinks are available to accommodate total capacity. There is an on-site school kitchen which is regularly inspected. All foods are prepared on-site. There is an AED on-site. On 4/29/2026, areas of study included the spring season and butterflies. Activities observed included small group work, outdoor large gross motor play, group circle events (e.g. spring concert practice, book reading) and center play exploration (e.g. car racing, marble run creating, counting work, water play, open crafting). Creative dramatics allowed for a real-life, 3yo superhero to save the day while also engage in classroom play! Evidence or previous days' curriculum included displays of child artwork (e.g. self-portraits, egg carton

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caterpillars, collective classroom artwork). During the monitoring visit, routine transitions were observed to go smoothly and included clean-up procedures, snack rituals and restroom/drink breaks. Curriculum allowed for a variety of experiences that piqued child interest as well as improved cognitive skills, strengthened emotional intelligence, enhanced physical coordination, and encouraged the use of social graces. On 4/29/2026, staff were observed to be in ratio, utilizing positive redirection when needed and engaged in programming with the children. Children appeared comfortable with staff and to be enjoying the day.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The mission of Xavier Catholic Schools "...is to form disciplines unafraid to follow Jesus Christ..." St. Joseph Childcare along with St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School "...is a faith-filled, family atmosphere parish school serving preschool through eighth grade that inspires families to lead, learn and serve through the Catholic faith.."

St. Joseph Childcare has the following websites for families and the community to learn about the program: https://crxcs.org/earlylearning and https://sjcsmarion.org/daycare-before-and-after-care.

As of 4/29/2026, Xavier Catholic School early learning locations continue to be overseen by a board of directors. St. Joseph Childcare's seasoned consistent management team (e.g. Ms. Schulte, Ms. Diercks) is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. The management team is organized and has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a secure manner. Ms. Diercks discussed future goals including participation is quality initiatives such as IQ4K. Ms. Diercks acknowledged staff longevity and professionalism.

As of 4/29/2026, St. Joseph Childcare was found to be maintaining required postings, maintaining family-program information centers, offering regular newsletters, utilizing technological communication resources, and offering family programming activities. Curriculum continues to occur in a Christian environment, is play based and includes a combination of learning strategies (e.g. Iowa Early Learning Standards, teaching strategies GOLD, teacher-inspired, Education in Virtues, Calendar of Saints). Curriculum also incorporates additional enrichments including off-site field trips, on-site guest speaker events, STEAM opportunities, themed days, and seasonal-holiday parties. Ms. Diercks talked about upcoming "2026 Summercare" events including nature hikes, gardening projects, fun and educational field trips, service projects, outdoor play including water days, summertime treats and much more. Ms. Diercks discussed receiving increased positive family feedback related to improved program-family communication as well as program offerings.

St. Joseph Childcare continues to have and update policies and procedures that include those for safety, daily health checks, diapering, hand washing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. On 4/29/2026, management acknowledged how their team of staff help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day by following the policies and procedures. Management also discussed having continued support from their board, Xavier Catholic Schools and St. Joseph Elementary School (e.g. school administration, school maintenance, school custodial team, school kitchen personnel) as to daily building and grounds conditions and repairs.

Xavier Catholic School learning centers have emergency plans, policies, and procedures that are regularly reviewed and updated as needed. Specifically, St. Joseph Childcare has successfully navigated through flooding events (2008 historic Linn County flood), 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, air quality alerts (2023, 2025), and repeated technology outages (7/19/24 global technology outage, 10/10/2025 AWS outage, 10/29/2025 Microsoft outage).

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

None noted.

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

Not applicable.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

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Please note - The newer school-age outdoor play equipment/climber has many features the hinder careful supervision as required under rule 109.10(14)a. This includes the lengthy tube slide with no ability for staff to see any materials that might be positioned inside and/or any persons who may be sitting in and/or gliding down. This also includes considerably elevated platforms with little ability for staff to see any materials that might be positioned on a platform and/or any persons who may be seated on an elevated platform. Due to height and supervision concerns, licensing continues to support everyday inspection of the equipment prior to use as well as daily review of outdoor rules with all children (e.g. not sitting or hiding on the platforms, not sitting or hiding in the tube slide).

Licensing supports relocating all DHHS licensed childcare space to one area or one wing of the school building. This will improve communication between all DHHS licensed classrooms/staff and improve security, particularly when the DHHS licensed learning center is operating when school is not in session.

Licensing strongly recommends you obtain a shed and/or storage unit to better organize and rotate the DHHS license learning center materials. Currently, the director's office is being used for some storage making a confidential meeting area between management and staff or families challenging.

Licensing strongly recommends as additional funding becomes available, St. Joseph Childcare seek the following items to increase and improve safety, compliance, and developmentally appropriate care: materials for school-age childcare (e.g. board games, card games, building materials, free crafting supplies, imaginative play items, books, sensory items), materials for preschool-age childcare (e.g. individual sensory play experiences, sensory spinning seats, sensory cushions, light table with transparent materials, sensory tiles, Xray sheets, dramatic play, baby dolls, dress-up, books, manipulatives, building items, comfy calming pillows and rugs, indoor large gross motor supplies), developmentally and physically appropriate child shelving in childcare rooms, loose outdoor large gross motor materials (e.g. balls, bubbles, sidewalk chalk, sensory, hoola hoops, romper stompers, low to ground balance items, riding toys), outdoor shed or deck boxes to store indoor and outdoor materials, and nature items (e.g. bird feeders, butterfly house, rain gauge, temperature gauge, raised garden bed).

Please ensure a monthly fire drill, a monthly tornado drill and a monthly outdoor play inspection is occurring and being documented as required.

It is noted that 4yo preschool room teacher Ms. Brady is graduating into retirement at the end of the 2025-2026 school-year. Congratulations, Ms. Brady! You are celebrated and thanked for your years of service in early learning!

This report additionally notes an administrative change. Licensing has received and reviewed an updated floor plan. Total capacity has increased to 128.

A full license is issued. Thank you for the visit.

Date: 06/05/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons

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**.