Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Little Cats' Daycare

Provider No.: 51683

Address: 912 Woodland AVE, Riceville, IA, 50466

County: Howard

Director's Name: Brooke Watson

On-Site Supervisor:

Phone Number: 6419852288

E-Mail: littlecatsdaycare@riceville.k12.ia.us

HHS Visit Date: 03/04/2026

Licensing Period: 04/01/2026 to 04/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 03/31/2025

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 2

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	5:30 AM to 6:30 PM		
Tuesday	5:30 AM to 6:30 PM		
Wednesday	5:30 AM to 6:30 PM		
Thursday	5:30 AM to 6:30 PM		
Friday	5:30 AM to 6:30 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	19	22	22	37	100
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

An unannounced annual visit was made to the Little Cats Daycare on 03-04-26 where I met with the center director, Brooke Watson. Brooke took over the director role in 2022 and is well qualified for the position with a BA in Family Services, prior experience in early childhood care and education, and on-going training. The ownership and operation of the center was transferred to the school and oversight by the school board in 2022. The program is located in the Riceville Community Elementary School and makes use of several classrooms for primary programming activities. The center provides full range programing to infants through school age children, and also provides a formal 3 year old preschool program. There are currently 116 children enrolled in the center served by 27 teachers. All aspects of the program subject to Licensing Standards were reviewed during the visit.

The general layout and programming remains much the same as in prior reports however the school is engaged in a major construction and renovation project and there are plans for the program to move to new classroom spaces later this summer. The program operates out of 4 classrooms, but as part of the construction the school age children are making use of space in a gymnasium. Classrooms are determined by age group with infants being split in to two rooms with one for birth – 1yoa, and the for 1-2 years of age. The space utilized for the school age children has space sectioned off using tall shelving units and other dividers to create a primary programming space and a large motor play space. Each room was observed to be clean with no immediate concerns noted due to maintenance. Each room has windows along the exterior walls that provide ample natural light, a view of the outdoors, and ventilation. Three of the rooms have secondary exits that provide direct access to the outdoor playground. The classroom used for the preschool programming only has the main entry. While there are windows for that classroom they open onto an enclosed courtyard that would not allow for secondary evacuation. The area being used for the school age children has multiple exits opening onto interior corridors. All emergency exits were clear of obstruction. Each room has sinks available in the classroom to facilitate hand washing. The issue that was noted in

the prior report for hand washing sinks having excessive temperatures had been corrected and were measured to be below the maximum allowable limit of 120 deg. F. Each classroom has independent water heating units and the other classrooms were also noted to be maintained at acceptable limits. Bathrooms are located off the main corridor and are designated as being for the daycare program. Each room has a small dorm size refrigerator present in the classroom. Each room is divided in to activity areas through the use of furniture, shelving, and play structures arranged in a manner that allowed the children room to move and play without creating any blind areas.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Good interactions were observed on the day of my visit in all classrooms. Each teacher was observed to be actively engaged with the children attending to their direct care needs, and implementing the planned schedule and curriculum. Examples include working on specific developmental skills with the children in the infant room such as one child that staff were assisting with developing emerging walking skills. In other classrooms with older children the teachers were engaged in specific craft activities, or school readiness skills reviewing letter and reading concepts. The center does use a Positive Behavior Support approach that includes routines, reminders, praise, and redirection. This approach was effective in that there were no behavioral concerns that were observed during the visit. Ratio was maintained as required in each classroom with at least 2 teachers present in each room.

Good health and safety policies and practices were observed on the day of the visit. I was able to observe several diaper changes and staff did follow the required procedures. Good cleaning practices were observed with staff using separate products for disinfecting and sanitizing and understanding the difference of when each should be used. Chemical cleaners, purses, diaper bags, and other items that could pose a safety risk to children were stored were they were not accessible. Over the counter medications were labeled with the name of the child to whom it belonged and documentation for authorization and administration was maintained. First aid kits are maintained in the classrooms and were generally stocked with materials necessary to address most common first aid needs. Additional supplies are maintained in the program office, and staff would also have access to the school office and nurse. Safe sleep practices were followed for infants under 1 year of age. Cribs, cots, and bedding were present for all children that nap, and were observed to be in good repair.

Meals are prepared by the school and a copy of the menu was posted. Meals are served in the classrooms and food is brought in covered containers. Good food service and handling practices were observed during the visit with staff wearing food service gloves, and using measured scoops when plating meals. Foods that could pose a choking hazard to younger children were cut up by staff in the classroom before providing to children. In addition to the meals served by the school some food and snack items are kept in the classrooms. Good storage practices were observed for both dry pantry, and refrigerated food items. Supervision is provided at the tables when eating.

The center has a separate playground space that is better suited to the preschool age children but can also make use of the school playground for older children. The preschool playground includes a variety of equipment including some preschool sized climbing structures, sandboxes, and other toys. Rubber mulch is used for fall surfacing and had been displaced to the point that there is insufficient material in the fall zones. Mature trees provide shade. As noted the program does have access to other school facilities and large grassy areas but does not have responsibility to maintain those structures so staff need to limit the children to use of those that are in good repair, and appropriate to the developmental levels of the children.

In reviewing administrative records The required notices for Mandatory Child Abuse Reporting, Availability of Standards and Consultant Contact, and No Smoking were all present and posted in an area readily accessible to all parents and visitors. Other required postings for emergency evacuation, emergency contacts, disease exposure, handwashing, diapering, daily schedule, lesson plans, and menu were also present. The center uses the Pro Care file management and communication system. Infant daily sheets were reviewed and staff were logging all required information daily with staff taking a photo of children as a visual depiction of their mood and activities. A random selection of both staff and child files were reviewed and compared to the self-audits completed by the center which were found to be accurate. In reviewing files the self-audit identified 8 child files that needed a renewed physical. In reviewing the self audit for staff files all contained all required documentation. All inspection logs and certificates were available and current. The parent handbook was reviewed and while the center did have all required written polices several did need to be expanded. This included updating Health and Safety policies to identify immediate notification to parents of serious injuries, and that a certificate of immunization exemption is acceptable. Incident Reporting policies need be updated to include completing written reports for situations of significant changes in functioning, and sexualized acting out.

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3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.11(4)a: Center must have safe outdoor program area adjacent to the center, with sufficient square footage to accommodate at least 30 percent of the enrollment capacity at any one time at 75 spear feet per child. Outdoor space must:Be free from litter and unsafe materials and free from contamination by the drainage or ponding of sewage or storm water.Include safe play equipment and an area of shade.Include fencing to protect from bodies of water or vehicular traffic. -- The rubber mulch fall surfacing of the preschool playground was insufficient. Additional material needs to be added to ensure a proper depth of material as required either by the ASTM standards from the manufacturer if applicable, or in compliance with the CSPS Public Playground Safety Handbook, (https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/325.pdf).

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

Brooke stated she would talk with the school about fall surfacing.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is recommended at this time. Please provide a written response to the licensing consultant identifying a plan of action to correct and maintain those aspects cited as not meeting licensing standards and identifying an anticipated date of compliance. At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

Date: 03/15/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Ray Salsbury

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**.