Iowa Department of Human Services
CHILD CARE CENTER EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE

Name of Center: Little Cats' Daycare **Enrollment:** 65 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 51683

Street: 912 Woodland AVE **City:** Riceville Iowa **Zip** 50466 **County:** Howard

Mailing Address: 912 Woodland AVE, Riceville, IA, 50466

Director's Name: Brooke Watson **Phone Number:** 641-985-2288

On-Site Supervisor(s): **E-Mail:** littlecatsdaycare@riceville.k12.ia.us

Date(s) of Visit: 03-13-2023

Licensing Visit X **Unannounced Visit** X **Off Year Visit** **Administrative Change**

LICENSING VISITS

X **New Application** **Re-Application** **NA**

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 12-17-2021

FIRE INSPECTION X **State** **Local** **NA** **Is Fire Inspection Approved?** X **Yes** **No** **NA**

Date Inspected: 06-13-2022

Comments :

LICENSE TYPE: X **Child Care** **Preschool (ages 3-5 meets three hours or less per day)**

Financial Type: Profit X Non-Profit NA

Accredition: Accredited NAEYC NSACA Other X NA

Program Serves: X Infants (0-23 mo.) X 2 Years X Preschool-Age X School-Age

Get-Well Evening Care Special Needs

SCHEDULE: X Year-round School-Year Summer Only

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General	19	22	22	22	85
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 01-01-2022 to 04-01-2024
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Raymond Salsbury **Date:** 03-21-2023

I. IF CURRENT LICENSE IS PROVISIONAL, IDENTIFY THE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

An unannounced visit was made to the Little Cats Daycare on 03-13-23 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 4 classrooms for primary programming activties. 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 65 children enrolled in the center served by 24 teachers. All aspects of the program subject to Licensing Standards were reviewed during the visit.

The general layout of the program and classrooms remains the same as in prior reports. As noted the program operates out of four classrooms determined by age group. 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 other 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. All emergency exits, and evacuation cribs were maintained so that they were clear of obstruction and operated easily and freely. Each room had sinks available in the classroom to facilitate hand washing. Bathrooms are located off the main corridor and children are escorted to the bathroom as needed. 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.

Activity centers vary by classroom with increasing options that are developmentally appropriate for older children. Examples of activity centers include large and small manipulatives, blocks, art/crafts, reading, sand/water/discovery, dramatic play, and group learning. Each center was stocked with a good variety of materials that were appropriate to the ages of the children present and were observed to be in good repair. Copies of the daily schedule and lesson plans were present in each classroom with a more focused plan for older age groups. As an example the infant room had a general theme related to St. Patrick's day with some of the craft projects being done with the children. The preschool classroom had a monthly theme of Community Helpers with weekly focuses of Firefighters, Police Officers, etc. Proper ratio was maintained in each classroom. Good interactions were observed in all classrooms with the teachers being engaged with the children and attending to their needs. The center does use a Positive Behavior Support approach with the children to encourage appropriate behavior but should look at reviewing approaches with responding to negative behaviors that do arise as one employee was observed to use a more forceful physical redirection with a child. While this did not rise to the level of being a licensing violation it was a situation that was not in keeping with the center philosophy and approach and Brooke did note that she would speak with the teacher.

Good health and safety practices were generally observed. While I was not able to observe a diaper change during the visit the employee in the infant room was asked about the procedures followed and she did identify that all steps to the required procedures are followed. Chemical cleaners, medications, personal items, and other items that could be a safety risk to

children all items were stored in cabinets or other areas that were not readily accessible to children. First aid kits are maintained in the classrooms and were generally stocked with materials necessary to address most common first aid needs but 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. One issue that was observed is that several of the classrooms were using heavy blackout drapes, with one room also using cardboard sheets to darken the room. The end result is that some rooms did not have sufficient illumination for the staff to be able to observe the children and be able to determine if they were in distress and needing assistance, or to ensure that an individual entering from a brightly lighted hallway would not suffer from momentary blindness. Options such as opening the curtains more, use of a lamp, or leaving some lights on were discussed as possible solutions.

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. In addition to the meals served by the school some food and snack items are kept in the classrooms. All food items were properly stored in air tight sealable food grade containers. 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 in some areas and needs to be raked back into fall zones. There was also a tripping hazard where the fall surfacing and the sidewalk met and material had been displaced. It was reviewed that one alternative would be to use a high visibility paint to delineate the edges and transition. 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 if any issues are noted.

In reviewing administrative records The required notices for Mandatory Child Abuse Reporting, Availability of Standards and Consultant Contact, and No Smoking were not posted in an area readily accessible to all parents and visitors. Copies of those notices were sent to the center and need to be posted at the main entrance to the center. With regard to staff and child files a random selection of each were reviewed and compared to the self-audit completed by the center which was found to be accurate. Based on the review and self audit all files were found to be within acceptable limits with 4 children needing a renewed physical where the prior had expired earlier in the month, and 1 employee who needed a current physical, and another who had not completed Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter training. All required inspection logs and certificates were available and current. The center had revised the employee and staff handbooks during the prior year which had been previously submitted for review and approval.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

This program has undergone a significant change with transferring ownership and oversight to the school in the previous year and this has resulted in a significant increase in the enrollment of children, and staff working at the center with both having doubled from the previous visit.

The center has also seen a reduction in some of the prior instabilities with less turnover of child enrollments and staff.

The center is continuing to look at making improvement to the center with engaging in fund raising to replace the rubber mulch used for fall surfacing on the playground with a new unitary foam surface.

IV. IDENTIFY THE ASPECTS OF OPERATION THAT FALL BELOW THE STANDARDS REVIEWED:

109.4(4): Requirements and procedures for mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse shall be posted where they can be read by staff and parents.
-- The required notice was not present on the day of the visit.

109.4(5): Child Care Centers and Preschool Licensing Standards and Procedures shall be available in the center and a notice stating a copy is available for review. Contact information of the child care consultant shall be included in the notice.
-- The required notice was not present on the day of the visit.

109.11(3)a: Center shall ensure that: Facility and premises are sanitary, safe, and hazard free. Adequate indoor and outdoor space is provided. The outdoor area shall include safe play equipment and area of shade. Sufficient space provided for dining. Sufficient lighting shall be provided. Sufficient ventilation. Sufficient heating. sufficient cooling. Sufficient bathroom and diapering facilities. Equipment, including kitchen appliances, are maintained so as not to result in burns, shock, or injury to children. Sanitation and safety procedures for the center are developed and implemented to reduce risk or injury or harm to children and reduce transmission of disease.

-- Insufficient illumination was provided in classrooms during nap time such that staff would not have been able to observe children regardless of relative positioning in the room and be able to determine if the child were in distress and needed assistance. Fall surfacing on the outdoor playground needs to be raked back into fall zones, and along sidewalks to ensure sufficient depth of material and smooth transitions.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license will remain in effect 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.

*Note: If you are the Child Care Center Director and you feel something is unclear or unjustly cited, please contact your DHS Licensing Consultant to discuss the issue. The child care director may also send a response which will be placed in the licensing file.

*Note: If you are a member of the general public, there may be additional information contained in the public file. You may contact the DHS Licensing Consultant to inquire.