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

Name of Center: St Matthew Early Childhood Center **Enrollment:** 137 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 24466

Street: 2244 1st Ave NE **City:** Cedar Rapids Iowa **Zip** 52402 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 2244 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52402

Director's Name: Sonya Benda **Phone Number:** 319-363-9309

On-Site Supervisor(s): Heather Waddell, Co-Director **E-Mail:** hwaddell@stmatthewcr.org

Date(s) of Visit: 01-18-2024

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

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

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

Date Inspected: 01-01-2023

Comments :

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

Financial Type: X Profit Non-Profit NA

Accredition: Accredited X NAEYC NSACA Other 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	32	24	116	81	253
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 02-01-2023 to 02-01-2025
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 01-23-2024

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

St. Matthew Early Childhood Center (ECC) is a non-profit program that has been in operation for several years. The St. Matthew ECC is located inside St. Matthew Catholic Elementary School. St. Matthew ECC functions under the jurisdiction of the St. Matthew Board of Education which consists of several elected members of the parish and the pastor. The program operates year-round Monday through Friday from 6:00am to 6:00pm. The program serves children age infant through school-age. Current enrollment is 137.

Co-Directors of St. Matthew ECC are Sonya Benda and Heather Waddell. Ms. Benda and Ms. Waddell have each been St. Matthew employees for several years before becoming co-directors in July 2022. Ms. Benda has over 20 years experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. Co-director Heather Waddell has over 10 years experience working with children and also continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 1/18/2024, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

St. Matthew ECC is a well established program offering many different early learning opportunities to help meet the needs of families and children throughout the community. The program is located in a predominantly urban area. The program accepts a variety of funding sources.

St. Matthew ECC has the following website for families and the community to learn more about the program: http://www.stmatthewcr.org/ecc/.

St. Matthew's mission is to "...provide a Christian environment in which each child can grow spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually through age-appropriate activities. We are committed, in collaboration with families, to enhance each child's character development and nurture the individual strengths and talents that allow each child to reach their potential..."

St. Matthew ECC has a history of participation in quality initiatives including NAEYC, QRS and local quality initiatives.

Ownership of St. Matthew ECC has remained consistent. The program's management team (e.g. Ms. Sonya Benda, Ms. Heather Waddell) is professional and organized, and in turn, daily operations run smoothly. The management team has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a secure manner. The management team is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. Management discussed future goals to replenish outdoor cushion surfacing and add age appropriate outdoor equipment.

Since the last monitoring visit, St. Matthew ECC has retained seasoned staff as well as hired a few new ones. Throughout

the classrooms staff reported celebrating 13 years, 10 years, 1 year, and 3 months with St. Matthew ECC. Staff appreciation and displays of gratitude continue to be part of the program's success. Management continues to hold regular room meetings to review policies and procedures as well as for staff to share concerns and joys. Notes of gratitude and thank you for staff were observed to be posted in various area of the program space.

St. Matthew ECC is a ministry of St. Matthew Catholic Church. St. Matthew ECC is located inside a building that also houses the St. Matthew Elementary School and St. Matthew Preschool. All programs in the building are part of the Archdiocese of Dubuque. St. Matthew ECC operates under a school board. Church administration, school administration, St. Matthew Preschool, school custodial staff, the board, and school kitchen personnel help ensure the program space is sanitary and hazard free each day. The school kitchen is regularly inspected by the local health department. Program foods are prepared and provided year round by the school kitchen. The space is ADA accessible and an AED machine is on-site.

St. Matthew ECC has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. The program has successfully navigated through the 2008 Linn County flood, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/2020 Derecho Storm and 2023 compromised air quality issues.

St. Matthew ECC continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has organized parent-staff/program information centers, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. St. Matthew ECC offers a variety of annual family events, open houses, and parent/family conferences. The St. Matthew ECC has an active PTO (parent teacher organization). The PTO holds regular meetings, sponsors fundraising events, holds annual back to school events, and also sponsors family activities.

St. Matthew ECC has some unique features including temper resistant receptacles and door hinge finger shield guards. There is an established infant car seat storage area. Classrooms continue to be arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork) are displayed throughout the program space. Materials are accessible to children. Curriculum includes Creative Curriculum, Biblical teachings, early academics, and teacher-inspired ideas. The curriculum historically also incorporates on-site guest speaker events, enrichment opportunities (e.g. Little Sports Torts, Dance Group), off-site summer field trips, cooking experiences, gardening events, and STEAM activities.

St. Matthew ECC collaborates well with local partners including local businesses, local school districts, other local childcare programs, health professionals and CCR&R.

Each child is engaged in a daily health check upon arrival for early detection of apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition or behavior which may adversely affect the child or the group. The program has policies and procedures in place for cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing. Cleaning supplies as well as cleaning checklists/reminders were observed on-site.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Areas of study included "Let it Snow Again", winter, snowflakes, dinosaurs, and artic
animals. Activities observed were many (e.g. infant cares, center play, group discussion with book reading, small group work). Children have access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, games, puzzles, sensory, crafts, water colors) that encourage innovative play. Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (e.g. clean up activities, food service rituals) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Throughout the classrooms, staff were overheard providing children with many words of encouragement and engaging children in much meaningful discussion. Children responded well to staff and appeared to be truly enjoying their day.

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

None noted.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Obtain a child gate (consider an extra wide retractable gate) with latch in lieu of bookshelves being used in Navigation 1 room.

Please review hand washing procedures including infant, child and staff hand washing after each diaper change, after toileting, and prior to any food service with all staff (Navigation 1 room).

Ensure all diapering areas have separate receptacles for soiled diapers and other refuse (Exploration 1 and 2). The soiled diaper receptacle shall be entirely enclosed (e.g. lid, preferably hands-free to help with sanitation). Remove the child

specific diapering container that is not being used in Adventure 2 room.

Please ensure all lesson plans and menus are updated in all classrooms.

Add a thermometer to Adventure 2 room refrigerator.

Ensure sensory bins are covered when not in use (shared 3yo preschool/childcare classroom).

Some areas of flooring (e.g. particularly child restroom areas) show much ware/staining. Please begin considerations and plan for remedy.

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The program's license remains in full status. Thank you for the visit.

*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.