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

Name of Center: St Pius X Early Learning Center **Enrollment:** 185 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 31443

Street: 4925 Council ST NE **City:** Cedar Rapids Iowa **Zip** 52402 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 4925 Council St NE, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52402

Director's Name: Morgan Bryant **Phone Number:** 319-200-4546

On-Site Supervisor(s): Sara Frew **E-Mail:** morgan.bryant@crxcs.org connie.schulte@crxcs.org

Date(s) of Visit: 06-04-2025

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: 03-13-2024

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*
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			

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General	28	18	144	237	427
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 05-01-2024 to 05-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 07-24-2025

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Xavier Catholic Schools owns and operates several learning centers throughout our community. Specifically, this license pertains to the St. Pius X Early Learning Center (St. Pius X ELC) which commenced operations in August 2014. This is a non-profit program located adjacent to the St. Pius X Catholic Elementary School. St. Pius X ELC does have access to space inside the St. Pius X Elementary School and space within the St. Pius X Catholic Church. St. Pius X ELC operates year-round Monday through Friday from 6:30am to 6:00pm. The program serves children age infant through school-age. Enrollment as of this report is 185.

Since the last monitoring visit, Xavier Catholic Schools learning centers established a multi-site executive director position to oversee all early learning. The multi-site executive early learning director is Connie Schulte who began in the position in July 2024. Ms. Schulte has much licensed childcare center director experience and continues to participate in child development related training. In October 2024, St. Pius X ELC additionally obtained a new director named Morgan Bryant. Ms. Bryant has a BS degree in Leisure Studies, prior experience working with children, and continues to participate in much child development related training. OSS/Assistant Director is Sara Frew. Ms. Frew has been with the program since 2014. Ms. Frew has a BA degree in education and literature, has much experience working with children and continues to participate in child development related training.

On 6/4/2025, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

St. Pius X ELC is a well-established program offering many different early learning and childcare opportunities to help meet the needs of families and children throughout the community. In August 2025, the program will be celebrating 11 years. Congratulations!

The mission of St. Pius X ELC is "...to promote the development of each individual to her/his fullest potential through an educational program permeated with a Christian Spirit and Christian values...children develop spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially through a Christian atmosphere..."

St. Pius X ELC has the following website for families and the community to learn about the program: https://stpiusxschoolcr.com/.

St. Pius X ELC is part of the Xavier Catholic School System and accredited by the Iowa Department of Education. Xavier Catholic Schools are part of the Archdiocese of Dubuque. The Archdiocese of Dubuque covers all of Eastern Iowa including high schools in Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, Gilbertville, Marquette, Mason City and Dyersville. St. Pius X ELC has a history of participating in local and state quality initiatives.

Since the last review, Xavier Catholic Schools established a new multi-site executive director of early learning position which was filled by Connie Schulte in July 2024. During 2025, Ms. Schulte will be celebrating her first full year in this position. Specifically in October of 2024, St. Pius X ELC obtained a new site-specific director Morgan Bryan who brings much experience including a nature-based learning philosophy to the program. The program's management team (e.g. multi-site executive director Ms. Schulte, site director Ms. Bryant, OSS/assistant director Ms. Frew, OSSs of school-age Ms. Tegeler and Ms. McDermott) 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. The management team is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. As a result, the program experiences smooth daily operations. Ms. Bryant discussed future goals related to increasing nature-based/natural experiences throughout the childcare, helping ensure the outdoor play spaces are updated (e.g. shade, equipment, gardens), updating the outdoor sensory path, having the center interior repainted and enhancing staff orientation with partnership with all of Xavier Catholic Schools early learning programs.

Over the last year, St. Pius X ELC has retained many seasoned staff as well as hired a few new ones. Staff throughout various classrooms reported celebrating 30 years, 11 years, 9 years, 5 years, 4 years, and 1 year of experience working with children including employment with St. Pius X ELC. Congratulations on much staff longevity! The program has several staff annual professional growth days built into the calendar (e.g. upcoming 2-day closure prior to 2025-2026 school-year commencing), utilizes the TEACH and Wage$ programs, and acknowledges staff successes.

Xavier Catholic Schools Early Learning Centers have emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Their programs have successfully navigated through the 2008 historic Linn County flood, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, air quality alerts (2023, 2025) and 7/19/24 global technology outage.

St. Pius X ELC is located inside St. Pius X Elementary School. St. Pius X Elementary School commenced operations in 1961. During 2025, St. Pius X Elementary School will be celebrating their 64th year of providing Catholic education within the community. How St. Pius X Elementary School and St. Pius X ELC came to fruition (e.g. Sisters of Mercy, creation of tuition assistance program, dedication of St. Pius X Church 1971, dedication of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish 1989, opening of Regis Middle School 1999, groundbreaking for St. Pius X ELC 2013) is quite impressive! St. Pius X ELC functions under the jurisdiction of the Xavier Catholic Schools Board consisting of elected parish members, school principals, and church pastors.

St. Pius X ELC has a collaborative partnership with St. Pius X Elementary School. Since the last review, St. Pius X ELC obtained a new maintenance person. Building and grounds are well-maintained. Furnishings and materials continue to be updated and/or replaced as needed. School administrators, school custodial staff, school board and school kitchen personnel help ensure the program is sanitary and hazard free each day. The school kitchen is inspected at least annually by the health department. The center's chef has been providing culinary delights to the childcare children for over 11 years! There is an AED on-site. The program continues to apply for and receive grants. Past grants have helped provide enrichments in gardening and technology. It is noteworthy that on the day of the monitoring visit, licensing observed school-age children engaged in an outdoor gardening experience that incorporated literacy, a sing-along, and planting of seeds. Ms. Tegeler talked about how the program is able to offer many farm-to-table experiences.

Classrooms continue to be arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork) are displayed in various program areas. St. Pius X ELC curriculum incorporates a religious component, play based enrichments, Handwriting Without Tears, "Character Counts", garden experiences, shared sensory boxes, on-site guest speaker events, off-site field trips experiences, open houses, parent/teacher conferences, holiday celebrations, buddy reading program, crafts, outdoor activities, community service projects, spring graduation ceremony, and teacher-inspired activities. Insightful 2025 summer planning by seasoned staff continues to allow the children to have a plethora of fun while socializing and learning! Summer activities include gardening, off-site field trips, on-site large gross motor activities, on-site guest speakers with traveling events or storytelling, and theme days. The program continues to maintain the staff-created unique outdoor guided movement paths for children to be able to develop their gross motor skills. Fundraising efforts (e.g. blood drives) also help St. Pius X ELC program obtain new materials (e.g. Unique PreK microscope! Clever prisms for PreK "light show" events!).

St. Pius X ELC 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. Family activities have included Kernels Night at the Ballpark and evening parenting classes. Management discussed the positive family feedback the program receives. Notes of thanks and gratitude were observed in various areas of the center.

St. Pius X ELC partners well with those throughout the community including the local school districts, early access persons, local businesses, CCR&R, TIES, and health professionals. Management talked about having Xavier High School students come to the center to engage in projects including recent "launching of rockets".

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 hand washing, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Areas of study include summer fun and gardening. Children have access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, sensory items, crafts) that encourage innovative play. Activities observed were many (e.g. infant cares, outdoor large gross motor play, center play experiences, group discussions, one-on-one craft work). Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their learning play experiences. Staff were observed communicating with the children verbally, with picture cards, and through sign language. Routine transitions (e.g. clean-up activities, food service rituals) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Staff were overheard engaging children in much meaningful discussion, utilizing positive redirection when needed and encouraging the use of social graces. 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:

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.
- Increased shade is required on the school-age playground.
- Repair or replace each damaged latch on the outdoor play area storage benches (e.g. infant-toddler playground) to help prevent pinching and/or other finger/hand injuries.
- Increase weed-thistle-grass control measures (particularly on the toddler and preschool-age outdoor play areas) to help prevent possible skin irritations and help decrease possible pest habitats.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Please ensure a tornado drill and fire drill are being conducted and documented each month as required.

Ensure lower classroom cabinets are child-proofed, or all contents be child friendly (e.g. room 2).

Ensure each on-site refrigerator and freezer unit has a working thermometer to help prevent food borne illness. Continue to also remind staff that each child shall receive a clean and sanitized drink or sippy cup with each meal and snack. Any milk or 100% juice left in a drink or sippy cup shall be discarded upon completion of each meal and snack (e.g. room 2).

Continue to ensure each child's personal items are stored separately including bedding to help prevent the transmission of illness (e.g. room 3). If bedding does not fit the cot tightly, it shall be removed and stored separately after each use.

Ensure each room has an area for all chemicals (e.g. cleaners, disinfectants, sanitizers) to be stored that is inaccessible to children but readily available to staff for use throughout the day (e.g. room 2). Also, continue to ensure each chemical bottle is properly labeled with name of product and manufacturer instructions of use (e.g. dilution if applicable, dwell time, purpose).

Push plate buttons continue to be strongly recommended at the main entrance/exit to the St. Pius X ELC building as well as the entrance/exit from the childcare building into the St. Pius X Elementary School building. Automatic doors can provide greater accessibility for all as well as improve transitions of food carts, supplies, and so on between buildings.

Licensing continues to strongly recommend a dishwasher be installed in the young infant room. If a dishwasher was available, infant room staff would have more time to dedicate to individual infant cares rather than hand washing bottles, toys, and so on.

With the immensely detailed and highly advanced ELC outdoor gardening projects, an expanded fully equipped center kitchen continues to be strongly supported. This will allow for better on-site meal/snack preparation and more advanced classroom cooking projects.

It is always beneficial to note, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) and the nurse consultant are excellent resources to access training opportunities and support in the area.

_____

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.