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

Name of Center: Stratford Early Learning Center **Enrollment:** 43 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 16109

Street: 1000 Shakespeare AVE **City:** Stratford Iowa **Zip** 50249 **County:** Hamilton

Mailing Address: PO Box 190, Stratford, IA, 50249

Director's Name: Katie Kinsella **Phone Number:** 515-838-2204

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

Date(s) of Visit: 06-18-2025, 07-27-2025, 08-05-2025

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

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

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

Date Inspected: 05-26-2023

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	12	8	20	20	60
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 08-01-2025 to 08-01-2027
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Raymond Salsbury **Date:** 08-13-2025

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

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

An unannounced annual visit was made to the Stratford Early Learning Center on 06-18-25 and again on 07-25-25. Follow-up communication was also made via e-mail with the last date of contact being 08-05-25. At the time of the initial visit the program was engaging in a center-wide field trip taking all children except the infants to an off-site activity. A follow-up visit was made on 07-25-25 to observe the program in operation and review administrative records. The follow-up communication was made regarding center progress on employee file reviews. During the time of the visits the center did have a change in leadership with Katie Kinsella being appointed as the director at the start of August 2025. Katie is well qualified for the position having been the director of another licensed child care program. The program is owned and overseen by the school and has offered a preschool wrap around program that operates in the school building during the school year in the past. The program serves infants through school age children. There are approximately 43 children enrolled though not all attend at any given time and the numbers reflect the open nature of the after school program that is available. There are 11 employees providing care in the program. All aspects of the program were reviewed.

The general design and layout of the center and classrooms remains the same as in prior reports. The center has 3 distinct classrooms with one room for infants, toddlers, and the preschool/school age children. The center also has a larger open central area that is used for meal service and provides additional space for the school age and preschool children. It is noted that the space used for the after school program makes use of space in the school cafeteria, gymnasium, and art room of the school building. Each classroom has direct secondary egress to the outdoors and issues were noted in each room. In the infant room the latch plate had loose screws, and in the toddler room the hinges were sagging. In both cases this caused the doors to be difficult to open though it is noted that by the time of the second visit the latch plate in the infant room had been tightened. In the preschool room items had been moved so that they were in front of the exit door and narrowed access. It was reported that this was done in preparation of cleaning and floor care that was to be completed. Staff do need to check emergency exits daily to ensure they are clear of obstruction and open easily and freely. The infant room does make use of evacuation cribs which were in good repair and clear of obstruction. One other maintenance issue that was noted in the infant room was with regard to ants which were observed to be present in the programming space, and which had caused "sawdust" to build up along the wall from burrowing. Again this was reported to have been addressed by an exterminator by the time of the second visit. The center makes use of an interior bathroom for emergency tornado shelter which was clear of obstruction. Each classroom has windows along the exterior walls that provide ample natural light, a view of the outdoors, and ventilation. Each room has elevated changing stations. Toilets are located off a corridor from the main commons area. Each classroom has sinks available in the classroom space to facilitate hand washing. The layout of each room is generally open with activity centers created through the placement of furniture, and play structures. The arrangement was such that it did not create any blind areas.

Each room had a good variety of toys and materials that were observed to be in good repair and appropriate to the ages of the children present. Items and toys with small parts that can break off and become choking hazards had been removed from classrooms serving children under 3 years of age. Each classroom had a copy of the daily schedule and planned curriculum posted. The center uses a weekly focus theme approach with themes developed for the full year and implemented in all classrooms. The staff do determine specific activities to implement that focus them based on the developmental skill levels of the children in the room. Good interactions were observed with the staff being engaged with

the children throughout the visits. This included transitional activities while waiting to go on the field trip or when moving from one programming activity to another. At other times the teachers were engaging the children in group activities such as art/craft where children were coloring, and playing with play-doh. The center uses a positive behavior support approach to encourage appropriate behavior with the use of planned activities, routines, and reminders. This approach was generally successful but there were some situations where children needed to be redirected, and in one case a child that became very upset to the point the teacher removed the child from the group. The teacher did take the child to an area away from the other children to talk and the child did quickly regain control and return to the group. Ratio was maintained as required in each classroom including the day of the initial visit when going off site where additional teachers and volunteers were present.

While the center does have established health and safety policies some practices do need to be reviewed. I was able to observe a diaper change while at the center and the required procedures were not followed. During the diapering the teacher did not deglove between handling soiled and clean items, did not wash the child's hands before returning them to the programming space, and did not clean the changing station properly in accordance with the manufacturer directions for the disinfectant being used. Medications, chemical cleaners, first aid kits, and personal items that may contain materials that could be a safety risk to children were stored in areas where they were not readily accessible to the children. When cleaning tables, changing stations, and other areas the staff did wait for the children to be out of the immediate area before using chemical cleaners. The center has a first aid kit that contains materials necessary to address most common first aid needs. Good safe sleep practices were observed for infants under 1 year of age. Cots with cover sheets were present for older children that nap.

The center is contracting breakfast and lunch service from the school. While the school also provides the snack items the center staff do prepare the snacks on-site. Meals are transported to the center in hot/cold holding containers. The center does have a small kitchen area where meals are prepared and portioned. A menu is posted and the meal served on the day of my visit was consistent with the planned menu. While the staff did not eat with the children supervision was provided at the tables. Meals were pre-portioned for the children and good food handling practices were observed with the staff wearing food service gloves, and using measured scoops to ensure each child received a full portion. Good food storage practices were observed for those items that are maintained at the center. The kitchen was clean with no evidence of insect or rodent infestation.

The center has a small toddler playground, and also makes use of the school playground. Wood chips are used for fall surfacing in both areas where there are climbing structures. The wood mulch in the toddler area has composted and some material should be removed to allow for replacement with fresh material as the current depth of material is insufficient. The equipment was generally in good repair but the retaining bolt for one of the tumblers of the spinner element was missing allowing movement in the tumbler and needs to be replaced. The center also had a small inflatable wading pool which had standing water present from a recent rain storm. Pools are not recommended for use in child care but if present need to be emptied when not in use.. Both playgrounds are enclosed by fencing and a fence also separates the two playgrounds. Large mature trees provide shade on both playgrounds.

In reviewing administrative records all required notices were posted in an area that was readily visible and accessible to parents and visitors. The center has implemented the use of the Playground, electronic communication application to document infant daily sheet information. In reviewing the information to provided to parents the staff were not logging daily disposition and activities as required. It was reviewed that the system does have the functionality to attach photos to individual feeds and this would be considered a visual depiction of activity and mood but if choosing that option staff would need to take a photo of every child every day in the morning and afternoon. When reviewing child files the center uses the school enrollment and record management system to ensure they have current information for all families. The school also obtains and maintains child physicals. In reviewing staff files it was reported that the center does maintain some information on-site but that the school is primary entity that maintains records. When reviewing staff files maintained by the center each reviewed file did not contain any of the required documentation.
Kati did state that one of her first goals is to review the employee files and ensure that they are brought up to date. In reviewing inspection logs and certificates those for Radon, and Fuel Burning Appliances could not be found. Fire and tornado drill logs had not been completed for June 2025 but all other months had been logged as being completed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

While the center has seen a change in the director role Katie is well acquainted with oversight and operation of child care programs having been the director of another program. In addition many of the part-time staff working at the center are licensed school teachers from the school.

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

109.9(1)a: All files contain:Copy of a department criminal history record check form or any other permission form approved by Department of Public Safety for conducting an Iowa or national criminal history record check. Copy of a request for child abuse information form, when applicable.Copies of results of Iowa record checks conducted through the SING for review by the department upon request.Copies of national criminal history check results.Any department issued documents sent to the center related to a record check, regardless of findings.
-- Documentation not available at the time of the visit.

109.9(1)b: All files contain a pre-employment physical exam report completed within six months prior to hire and at least every three years. Physical exams shall be documented on form 470-5152, Child Care Provider Physical Examination Report.
-- Documentation not available at the time of the visit.

109.9(1)c: All files contain documentation to indicate that ongoing staff training requirements are met, including current certifications in first aid/CPR and mandatory child abuse training.
-- Documentation not available at the time of the visit.

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 woodchips used for fall surfacing beneath climbing structures has composted and is of insufficient depth of material. Fall surfacing needs to be replaced or supplemented to ensure a proper depth of loose fill material. The missing retention bolt of the spinner element of the climbing structure needs to be replaced.

109.11(8)b: Centers at ground level that use basement area as program space, or have a basement beneath program space: Testing and plan for remedy of radon is conducted.
-- Documentation not available at the time of the visit.

109.11(8)c: All centers: Annual inspection prior to heating season of all fuel-burning appliances to reduce risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and shall install one carbon monoxide detector on each floor that conforms to UL Standard 2034.
-- Documentation not available at the time of the visit.

109.12(4)b: Each infant and toddler shall be diapered in a sanitary manner as frequently as needed at a central diapering area. Diapering, sanitation, and hand-washing procedures shall be posted and implemented in every diapering area. There shall be at least one changing table for every 15 infants.
-- Staff did not deglove between handling soiled and clean materials, did not wash the child(ren)'s hands, did not follow the manufacturer label directions when using disinfecting agents.

V. 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.

NOTE: Katie has identified a plan to review and update all staff files.

*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.