Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Creative Kids Company - Vinton

Provider No.: 52511

Address: 308 E 13th Street, Vinton, IA, 52349

County: Benton

Director's Name: Meredith Zuspann & Kelsey Fish

On-Site Supervisor: Holli Lewis

Phone Number: 3194365877

E-Mail: creative.kids.vs@gmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 07/13/2026

Licensing Period: 08/01/2026 to 08/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 12/23/2024

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	6:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

- [ ] Infant(0-<24 Months)
- [ ] Toddler
- [X] PreSchool
- [X] School Age
- [ ] All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General					0
Summer	0	0	46	37	83

1. Basic Overview

On 07/13/26 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Creative Kids Company in Vinton. I met with Meredith Zuspann, a co-director. Kelsey Fish is also a co-director but was not present on the day of my visit. Ms. Zuspann has a BA in education for K-8 and an MA in teaching and reading. She was employed as an elementary teacher since August 2009 until she purchased Creative Kids Company. Ms. Fish has a BA in elementary education and an MA in educational leadership. She has an expired administrator's license. She was an elementary teacher for ten years and then an induction coach for Grant Wood AEA. Holli Lewis is the on-site supervisor. Ms. Lewis was previously a director at a childcare center and has a BA in business administration. The program employs 24 staff members.

This program was formally Vinton Early Learning Center School Age program. They took over ownership and started caring for children on 06/03/24.The program operates out of Tilford Elementary School in Vinton. It operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 am until 6:00 pm. They currently serve preschool and school-aged children, ages three through twelve-years-old. There are currently 77 children enrolled.

The program operates out of two classrooms, the art room and the gym. The school age children use the art room and gym and there are two preschool classrooms. An inspection of each space was completed. Windows provide natural lighting in the classrooms and art room. Artificial lighting is used in the gym. They provide childcare to preschool children all day during the school year.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks/Lincoln Logs, table toys, games, literacy, STEM, puzzles, transportation, dramatic play, art, and magnets. Centers were arranged in a manner that allowed easy movement between activities, but it also allowed for clear supervision by staff members. Materials were in good condition.

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

The materials are located at child level, so they are easily accessible to the children.

Curriculum is developed by the teachers. A lesson plan was available for review in each room. A variety of resources are used, such as Pocket of Preschool, Heggerty Phonological Awareness and Lakeshore Counting Box. A daily schedule was posted in the preschool and school age space.

They participate in several field trips during the summer months. A school bus is used for transportation.

There is a sink in the three year old preschool classroom, the four year old preschool classroom and the art room. Handwashing procedures must be posted near the sink in the three year old room and the art room.

There is a bathroom near the preschool classrooms that has three toilets, two sinks and a diaper changing table. Handwashing and diaper changing procedures were posted. The school age children use bathrooms near the cafeteria. The boy's bathroom had two toilets, two urinals and two sinks. The girl's bathroom has four toiles and two sinks. Handwashing procedures must be posted in both locations. There are additional bathrooms in the school.

The program uses the Playground app to communicate with parents and they keep electronic staff and children files in the app.

The staff members use two-way radios to communicate. Emergency numbers with the center's address and phone number were posted in classrooms. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by most of the main program doors and outdoor exits in the center. Please make sure the diagrams are placed near all exits out of a programming space.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in January 2025 and must be repeated in five years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The annual fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. Carbon monoxide detectors are on site and are part of the fire system on the ceilings. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 12/23/24.

The program is not on the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) but follows the guidelines. All children receive breakfast and lunch. The preschool children receive a morning and afternoon snack. The school age children only receive an afternoon snack. All the children receive free breakfast and lunch through the Summer Meal Program through the school during the summer months. When the free lunch is not running, the center provides a cold lunch option or parents can provide the meals.

During the school year the preschool children receive breakfast, lunch and a morning and afternoon snack. Breakfast and lunch are provided by the school and snacks are provided by the childcare center. The school provides a new breakfast and lunch menu each month. The center uses a two week rotation of menus for snacks. Menus are maintained in the Playground app for parents.

The school cafeteria workers are present during the summer and serve the school age children cafeteria style and they eat in the cafeteria. The preschool staff members pick up breakfast and lunch from the cafeteria and they eat in their classrooms. Family style is not used. Menus were available for review. Disposable products are used. There is a refrigerator in the staff room and thermometers were present. Food items on hand were stored according to NHSPS guidelines. The snack cabinet is very organized. The center has allergy information for the children on the carts used to deliver snack.

The program uses Members Mark Sanitizer to sanitize the food tables. It is also used to disinfect the changing table if necessary.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside the entrance. The mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously posted. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance.

The program uses the school's playgrounds. These are fenced in. The school age children have a large, spacious area. In one area there is poured in place fall surfacing. There is a shade structure with picnic tables and a bench. There are also trees for shade. There are multiple large pieces of climbing equipment with several activities including slides and climbing walls. There is a web climber. There is also smaller equipment with slides. There are teeter totters, balance beams and a

concrete area with basketball hoops. There is a Gaga Ball area.

There is another area where woodchips are used for fall surfacing. There are swings, monkey bars, a zipline and a web climber. Woodchips should be raked regularly under the equipment so there are not deep gaps under the swings.

There is a fenced in playground for preschool children. It uses poured in place fall surfacing. The area has a piece of climbing equipment with slides. There ae swings, spinning toys and teeter totter. There is an area that has woodchips and a sandbox. There is a shade shelter over the sandbox. There is a sensory table and picnic tables for the children to rest.

The poured in place fall surfacing on the preschool playground has a large hole where the school had to dig. There is a small spot on the school age playground that needs to be repaired. Ms. Zuspann states the school is going to fix both areas.

Staff and children's files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed eight children files. They had two outdated physicals and one missing physical. They had one invalid immunization certificate because it was not on the mandated HHS immunization certificate and there was one missing certificate.

I reviewed two staff files. I reviewed I-Powe for on-going training hours. MD did not have evidence of on-going training hours in her file or on I-Power since 2022. AC did not have any documentation of ongoing training in her file or in I-Power.

I reviewed policy and procedures, staff and parent handbooks. The necessary written emergency procedures and policies were present. Emergency Preparedness Plans have been completed.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

Staff members had fantastic interaction with the children. They talked with the children about feelings and acknowledged the children's feelings. Staff members offered the children choices and talked with the children about sharing and problem solving. They used timers for children to rotate to new activities. Staff members were flexible and spoke with the children in a positive, calm tone. They encouraged children to use their imaginations and kept them engaged in activities. They provided clear and easy to understand directions for the children. They talked with the children about using their words to express themselves and they modeled good manners. Staff members provided the children with praise but used positive redirection when necessary. Staff members interacted with the children at the child's level. Staff members included the children in solving problems. The children appeared to enjoy their time at the center.

The center provides a good routine for the children that is educational and fun. They keep the children active. Staff members are organized in the classrooms.

The center has a terrific administrative team. The administrative from the Vinton site and Shellsburg site meet routinely to make sure everyone is on the same page. They are very organized. The classrooms have posters that list out staff shift expectations and routine timelines. The administrative team are great leaders for the other staff members and they have a good knowledge of the licensing rules.

They have a large group of school age children for the summer. They divide the children into two groups and rotate them between the outside playground, the gym, doing a craft and enjoying toys in the art room. The school age children start their day with a morning meeting where they go over different topics such as respect, staying with their group, friendship, sportsmanship and emotions. They will give a power point and give "kudos" where children are recognized for positive behaviors.

The preschool children enjoy a water day once each week and go on a field tip every other week. The school age children take a big field trip every Wednesday. They go to the pool every Tuesday and Thursday. On Mondy they have a guest speaker and on Friday they watch a movie. They use the school bus for field trips and they have field trips with the Shellsburg site.

The school gym teacher visits each site twice each week to teach new games and activities to the school age children and then staff members can continue those lessons.

The program has staff longevity and they have several school personnel helps during the summers.

They have a good partnership with the school.

The center has a caring approach and the administration team and staff members show commitment and dedication to the program.

The program is open on no school days. For weather, they follow the school schedule.

Ms. Lewis states they work very hard to keep all the children in care, even if they have difficult behaviors. They meet with the parents and involve Grantwood AEA. AEA helps provide great strategies. Ms. Lewis states Ms. Zuspann and Ms. Fish are both interventionalists and they teach staff members different strategies to work with children also.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.7(2): Center directors and all staff have the required contact hours of training.
I reviewed I-Powe for on-going training hours. MD did not have evidence of on-going training hours in her file or on I-Power since 2022. AC did not have any documentation of ongoing training in her file or in I-Power.

109.9(2)h: Signed and dated valid Certificate of Immunization, Certificate of Immunization Exemption, or Provisional Certificate of Immunization, provided by the department must be on file for each child enrolled as required by Iowa Administrative Code 641—7.
They had one invalid immunization certificate because it was not on the mandated HHS immunization certificate and there was one missing certificate.

109.9(2)i: Preschool (for children five years and younger not enrolled in school): Physical exam report submitted within 30 days of admission, was obtained no more than 12 months prior to admission, is signed by a licensed MD, DO, Chiropractor, PA, or ARNP, and contains health history; present health status including allergies, medications, and acute/chronic conditions; and recommendations for continued care if necessary.
They had two outdated physicals and one missing physical.

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

N/A

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is issued. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

An administrative change is being made to remove Mindy Kies as an on-site supervisor at this site. She is at the Shellsburg site.

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management:
I discussed with Ms. Zuspann her oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance. Ms. Zuspann states the classrooms have posters to assist staff members respond to difficult situations with options on how to handle situations. The posters address de-escalation techniques, safety measures taken, emotional support used, and skill reviewed. The handbook states that the center uses the PBIS approach.

The administrative is continually walking through the program to monitor. Staff members also have walkie talkies to communicate and ask for assistance if necessary.

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Date: 07/21/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost

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**.