Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Holy Cross St Michael Center

Provider No.: 46318

Address: 4105 HARRISON ST, Sioux City, IA, 51108

County: Woodbury

Director's Name: Julie Berenstein

On-Site Supervisor:

Phone Number: 7128989837

E-Mail: julie.berenstein@bishopheelan.org

HHS Visit Date: 12/02/2025

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

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 09/04/2025

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday		8:15 AM to 3:15 PM	
Tuesday		8:15 AM to 3:15 PM	
Wednesday		8:15 AM to 3:15 PM	
Thursday		8:15 AM to 3:15 PM	
Friday		8:15 AM to 3:15 PM	
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General			16		16
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

I completed an unannounced visit to Holy Cross St Michael's Center where I was able to speak with Julie Berenstein, director. Ms. Berenstein brings extensive experience of working with children in this age group. She holds a degree in Elementary Education as well as a Master's Degree in Learning Disabilities.

The 3-year-old preschool program offers both a half-day and an extended-day option to accommodate family needs. The extended-day program runs from 8:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., while the half-day preschool option is available from 8:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Monday through Friday. This preschool program is operated by Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools. The preschool program operates in a dedicated classroom within Holy Cross Elementary School during the regular school year. There are currently 15 children enrolled in the program, with 10 children present at the time of my visit.

All areas of the program were observed. These areas observed consisted of classroom observations and activities, nutritional practices, health and safety practices, field trip and transportation practices, and administrative review.

The center implements a creative, theme-based curriculum designed to foster development across all early learning domains. Activities are centered around weekly or monthly themes that integrate literacy, math, science, art, and music in age-appropriate ways. The curriculum also emphasizes social-emotional learning, encouraging children to build relationships, express emotions appropriately, and develop independence. Hands-on experiences, sensory play, and guided exploration are key components, supporting both individual growth and group collaboration.

Each learning center in the classroom includes a description of the developmental skills children are building through play. For example, the dramatic play area encourages creativity, role-playing, and social interaction. Through pretend scenarios,

children practice communication, problem-solving, and cooperation, while also exploring real-world concepts such as family roles, community helpers, and daily routines. This week's activities are centered around the theme of the five senses. Ms. Berenstein made excellent use of visual tools to engage the children in learning. For example, she used a Mr. Potato Head toy to help children identify the eyes, ears, mouth, and nose, prompting them to explain the function of each. Additionally, small mirrors were provided so the children could observe their own eyes. The children were highly engaged in the activity and enthusiastically discussed the color of their eyes, demonstrating both curiosity and observational skills.

Staff were observed actively engaging with the children throughout the day. They used songs as an effective teaching tool, incorporating music to support learning in areas such as language development, routine transitions, and concept reinforcement. The use of music helped maintain a positive and interactive classroom environment, encouraging participation and enhancing memory retention. Staff were also observed using positive redirection techniques to guide children's behavior in a supportive and respectful manner. There were meaningful discussions with the children about being patient and waiting their turn, helping to reinforce important social-emotional skills such as self-regulation, empathy, and cooperation.

The center follows the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines for nutrition. Morning snacks are provided by parents, while lunch and afternoon snacks are supplied by the program.

The center does not administer medication. A complete first aid kit was observed on-site. Monthly fire and tornado drills are documented, and a radon test has been completed with results within the normal range. A functioning carbon monoxide detector is present in the facility.

At the time of the visit, the annual heating inspection report was not available. However, good sanitary procedures were observed, and all program areas appeared clean, well-maintained, and organized. The center has established and follows strong health and safety policies and procedures. The preschool program does not transport.

One of the current goals of the program is to increase enrollment by continuing to provide high-quality early childhood education and maintaining strong relationships with families and the community.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

A weekly letter is sent home to families outlining the theme of the week, along with planned activities and learning objectives. This communication helps keep parents informed and engaged in their child's early learning experience.

The program is supported by long-term staff members who demonstrate a high level of education, extensive training, and a strong commitment to early childhood education. Their experience and dedication contribute significantly to the program's stability and overall quality.

The center maintains a strong, positive relationship with parents, fostering open communication and collaboration. This partnership supports children's development and helps create a consistent and supportive environment between home and school.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

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

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5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Program needs to email consultant confirming that those items that fall below standards have been corrected by 01-15-25.

A full license is recommended at this time.

At least one visit will be made to the center each year.

Date: 12/02/2025

HHS Licensing Consultant: Leann Steinhauer

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**.