



Moving experience: Marie Wightman introduces Alexandra Harper to Tatty Bumpkin movement and music classes at Harraby Community Centre

It's not long before Alexandra is on her feet, giggling as she hops, skips and jumps with the Tatty Bumpkin doll.

Three-year-old Alexandra and her mum Nicola Harper are among the first to attend Marie's Tatty Bumpkin children's classes in North Cumbria.

The classes were the creation of Sam Petter in 2004 and inspired by simple yoga movements, they are designed to be fun but educational.

And the flexible and creative activities are not just for the children – grown-ups are encouraged to join in as well.

Nicola, from Harker, said: "It is something for Alexandra to do outside nursery and it gets her to use her imagination and she looks to be really enjoying it.

"It is a good way of getting children used to movement.

"For the adults, it helps to get rid of inhibitions and to bond with their child."

The Tatty Bumpkin doll is at the heart of each class and helps to bring ideas to life and encourage the children to become involved in the experience.

Children learn through audio, visual and using touch and animals and props are used with the yoga movements, music and storytelling.

The classes have been developed by education specialists, yoga teachers, paediatric physiotherapists and musicians.

Marie, 35, first saw the Tatty Bumpkin line of clothing in the outdoor clothing shop she was working in and when she found out about the ethical nature of the business she became interested in offering the classes.

All the materials used by the company are made from organic cotton by a fair trade co-operative and Tatty Bumpkin was voted in the top 100 ethical UK companies.

Marie said: "I always wanted to run my own business and I liked the fact that Tatty Bumpkin is an ethical business.

"I think children and their parents or carers can get a lot out of the classes."

Marie, from Fletchertown near Wigton, now manages a franchise of Tatty Bumpkin in North Cumbria.

She received Cache (Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education) accredited training and the classes also encompass the Early Years Foundation Stage through its stories each week.

The classes are suitable for children aged 18 months to five.

More taster sessions are taking place this week and weekly classes start in the coming weeks, including classes in Penrith, west Cumbria and the Carlisle area.

Marie can also run Tatty Bumpkin children's parties.

To find out more call 0845 6802082 or visit www.north.cumbria.tattybumpkin.com