



OLIVIA HUNGERFORD

Co-founder of British Tutors, Olivia Hungerford tells The List about her experiences as a private tutor and dishes on her favorite children's books.

The List: What propelled you to start British Tutors?

Olivia Hungerford: I came over from London to work as a private tutor in Hong Kong, and just realized pretty quickly that there was a market for this kind of approach.

The List: And what kind of approach is that?

OH: Well, for starters, we don't really focus on grammar so much as provide a holistic academic approach. Instead of rote learning and memorization that can be quite

haphazard, we emphasize comprehension, creative thinking and writing skills—all woven together.

The List: How has the business evolved?

OH: Our core business is one-on-one private tuition, which we only offer in Hong Kong. We also do long-term tutor placements in China to provide really intense language tutoring; it's kind of like an old-fashioned governess.

The List: When do kids typically start?

OH: The average age has changed so much over the years. The youngest is about 8 months old, but the average age tends to be about 5 or 6 years old.

The List: Can you give an example of a lesson?

OH: Younger children think of reading as a technical skill. They can read a whole book perfectly but haven't the foggiest clue what is happening. We'd read a book together, say Roald Dahl, and stop every few pages

to ask questions: What is happening? What is the child in the book thinking? What do you think happens next? Then afterwards, follow up with a creative writing exercise to show all of the possibilities that the book opened up.

The List: What are some book suggestions?

OH: For little boys, I think the "The Iron Man" by Ted Hughes is fantastic, as well as Brian Selznick's "Wonderstruck," which is a great combination of words and images. For girls, I really like the "Molly Moon" series.

The List: What can parents do with their kids?

OH: The most important thing is for parents to read fiction with their children. They need to make sure they are not only reading, but asking questions and choosing the right books. They may have bought the whole Disney collection, but those aren't that fantastic.

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