

# A Solid Jewish Foundation At Bialik

## BIALIK COLLEGE

At Bialik College, Jewish learning takes place in a way that allows students to take ownership of the way they celebrate their heritage and religion, whilst reflecting on how they can express this as a Jew living in Australia, as part of their immediate community and as part of their family.

The learning occurs as a 'spiral curriculum', where each year, students build on their prior knowledge. Stories, songs and role-play are the vehicles for the youngest children in the ELC and Primary school to encourage a passion for Jewish history, culture and traditions. With a child-centred approach, all aspects of Judaism are woven in to the fabric of daily life at Bialik. The students say brachot (blessings) over their food, celebrate chaggim (festivals) and learn prayers that form the foundation of Judaism, like the Shema.

From this base, knowledge about their Jewish culture expands with more depth and detail. Jewish customs and heritage are taught alongside tfillot (prayers) and Hebrew language so that students advance through their school years with a solid Jewish foundation.

In Year 2, students receive their siddurim (prayer books), from which great explorations take place. As prayers are learned, they are unpacked to find meaning that resonates with the students and any and all questions are welcomed. No question is out of bounds – as a Jewish school with a pluralist ethos, we understand that every family in our community has their unique expression of Judaism and so every child will have questions relevant to their own understanding.

As students progress to Years 4 and

5, it becomes important to link Jewish learning to concepts that are relatable and relevant to them. For instance, when learning about Rosh Hashanah, Primary students have discussions around Bialik's value of 'Responsibility'. They explore the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel, investigating the ways in which the characters failed to take responsibility for their actions.

They relate this back to themselves, looking at how they intend to take responsibility in the New Year. They also discuss how Responsibility is a fundamental quality demonstrated by a competent leader and how this value can be carried out in their own leadership endeavours.

Through these investigations, students learn the key concepts of each festival and are able to carry out the mitzvot related to it such as, in the case of Rosh Hashanah, self-reflection and repentance.

As a proudly Zionist school, one aspect of Jewish learning that is integral to life at Bialik, is a love for and connection to the land, people and the language of Israel. For over 70 years, the College has been teaching 'Ivrit B'Ivrit, an idea that deeply engages students in the language, increasing their understanding.

A core belief of Bialik College is respect for individual choice of expression when it comes to Jewish identity. Principal Jeremy Stowe-Lindner's comment succinctly captures this sentiment: "Bialik's healthy approach to Judaism best reflects the plurality of our thriving and dynamic Melbourne Jewish community."

