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Pupils have taste of the quiet life

Article | Published in TES Cymru on 18 May, 2007 | By: Jill Tunstall

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THE IPOD and YouTube generation of students are swapping their hedonistic lifestyles to live like monks at a Buddhist retreat in north Wales offering special teaching packages.

Brother Edo and Brother William, who spent a year rebuilding a derelict farm at Trawsfynydd, near Dolgellau, have opened their monastery doors to schools. Their A-level package for RE students includes silent meals, meditation and chanting.

They now plan to extend their work programmes so all age groups can experience their way of life.

"This is a way for young people to learn about a different culture," says Brother Edo from Hokkaido, Japan, who is learning Welsh.

A group of 20 pupils from Ysgol David Hughes, Menai Bridge, were the first to visit the lakeside Pine Forest Sangha to spend a day with the monks and their menagerie of animals, including pigs.

"It was a pleasure to host this group," says Brother William, who comes from England originally. "We sat in noble silence during lunchtime - the young people were very respectful."

Brother Edo added: "They asked some good questions."

Delyth Williams, RE teacher at the school, said the long periods of silence were a strain on some of the pupils, who are used to living with constant noise.

"They were given the chance to practise a mantra and to meditate. The periods of silence made a lasting impression on them," she said.

* <http://www.pineforest.org.uk/>

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