

Carry On Teacher

UK : 1959 : dir. Gerald Thomas : Anglo Amalgamated / Beaconsfield : 86 min
 prod: Peter Rogers & Gerald Thomas : scr: Norman Hudis : dir.ph.:

[Richard O'Sullivan](#)
 Ted Ray; Leslie Phillips; Kenneth Williams; Kenneth Connor; Hattie Jacques; Joan Sims;
 Charles Hawtrey; Rosalind Knight; Cyril Chamberlain; George Howell; Diana Beevers;
 Jacqueline Lewis; Roy Hines; Carol White; Jane White; Paul Cole; Larry Dann

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 € M ☼	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Halliwell's Film Guide general note following a review of "CARRY ON SERGEANT":

"...From this unlikely beginning sprang almost twenty years of **CARRY ONs**, their plots gradually disappearing under an accumulation of old jokes which grew steadily bluer. Colour did little to disguise their makeshift construction, and they never raised their sights as high as satire, but they became a British institution like fish and chips, and many of the regulars became stars. Apart from Williams, Hawtrey and Connor, those most regularly featured in the sequels were Sid James, Bernard Bresslaw, Jim Dale, Joan Sims, Hattie Jacques, Peter Butterworth, and Jack Douglas, with occasional guests such as Harry H Corbett, Juliet Mills and even Phil Silvers. All were produced by Peter Rogers and Gerald Thomas; most were written (or recollected) by Talbot Rothwell. Delivered at the rate of roughly two a year."

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Pupils of a secondary school attempt by means of chaos and rebellion to prevent their headmaster being transferred. Structurally chaotic film brimming with caricatures and classic school jokes. ***1/2**"

The British Film Catalogue 1895-1985 listing:

"Comedy. Pupils play tricks on inspectors so that their headmaster's transfer will be rejected."

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

"Dean of a private school¹ wants a better position, but his students and classmates wish him to stay², so they sabotage a scheduled inspection to make him look bad. ****1/2**"

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"Fair (1963) and funny, with Leslie Phillips and Ted Ray as additions to regulars Kenneth Connor, Kenneth Williams, Joan Sims. **3**"

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"Third in the famous series, with Ted Ray showing how good he might have been as a second Will Hay. Here he's an acting headmaster hoping to move on to better things. But with a staff that includes Kenneth Williams, Kenneth Connor, and Charles Hawtrey, it's a pound to a pinch of

¹ That's "headmaster of a state school" to you and me...

² Nope, his classmates left school long years since. He's the **headmaster** you see.

itching powder that it will all end in disaster. ** ”

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

“Third entry in Peter Rogers' sock **CARRY ON** series combines virtually the same team to use the same yock-raising formula, this time in the scholastic field, and the laughs come readily. This time screenplay writer Norman Hudis has developed a slightly stronger story line and made the characters more credible. Ted Ray is the acting headmaster of a school who, after 20 years, has set his heart on the headmastership of a new one in the country. Much depends on the report put in to the Ministry of Education by a visiting inspector and a child psychiatrist. Because they don't want the popular master to leave, the students³ decide to sabotage his chances and start a well-planned campaign of bad behaviour to influence the visiting inspectors.

Some of the gags are telegraphed but the cheerful impudence with which they are dropped into the script is completely disarming. Ray, playing straighter than most of his colleagues, gives a pleasant performance. There's Kenneth Connor giving a fine performance as a nervous science master; Kenneth Williams and Charles Hawtrey, as a couple of precious masters in charge of literature and music respectively; Hattie Jacques as the formidable mistress who wages war on the saboteurs, and Joan Sims in her usual inimitable form as a games mistress. Leslie Phillips is the psychiatrist and Rosalind Knight is the inspector. ”

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times reviews:

“Early days for the **CARRY ONs** – it's number three in the series. There's a conventional story – pupils play tricks on the school inspectors to sabotage their headmaster's promotion – rather than a series of sketches and gags. Welcome

faces Ted Ray and Leslie Phillips join regulars Williams, Jacques and Hawtrey who turn a fair script by Norman Hudis into a funny film. *** ”

“When a Ministry of Education Inspector visits Maudlin Street School, the pupils embark on a programme of sabotage.”

“When a Ministry of Education Inspector visits Maudlin Street School, the pupils make sure they misbehave. *** ”

“The third in the **CARRY ON** series.. is a gentle comedy about the concerted efforts of both the pupils and staff of Maudlin Street school to dissuade headmaster from accepting a post elsewhere. The pranks are Bash Street Kids' calibre and raise few laughs, but the staff-room infighting is good value, with drama teacher Kenneth Williams and educational psychologist Leslie Phillips squabbling with maths teacher Hattie Jacques over corporal punishment, and gym mistress Joan Sims feuding with school assessor Rosalind Knight over weedy Kenneth Connor. Ray comes over as something of a prig and a cloying sentimentality dogs the whole affair, but it's still fun. *** ”

Daily Mirror note:

“Gym mistress Joan Sims' shorts split but your sides won't in a tame school **CARRY ON**. ** ”

Cast:

William Wakefield	Ted Ray
Gregory Adams	Kenneth Connor
Michael Bean	Charles Hawtrey
Alastair Crigg	Leslie Phillips
Sarah Allcock	Joan Sims
Edwin Milton	Kenneth Williams
Grace Short	Hattie Jacques
Felicity Wheeler	Rosalind Knight
Alf	Cyril Chamberlain
Robin Stevens	Richard O'Sullivan
Sheila Dale	Carol White

³ Or “pupils”, as we say in English

It's ironic, since the series was such a venerable British institution, that we must turn to a Dutch reference work and an American one for the only substantial reviews of the film. The **CARRY ON** farces were never particularly funny even when they were fresh, but like idiot children they engender an indulgent fondness – we wince at their leaden puns and seaside postcard innuendo, but smile at the all-too-obvious antics of Hawtrey, Connor, Williams, James et al. They stand in the direct tradition of Max Miller and George Formby, cheeky chappies of the English working class, reassuring and comforting in their banality. The entire series was made on a miserly budget, even after the films had proved their box office potential, and the stars were disgracefully underpaid by their producers, who of course continue to reap a tidy income from video sales, televised highlights from the series, etc.

The best to be said for "**CARRY ON TEACHER**" is that it captures most of the original team (only Sid James is absent) at their prime, and whereas guest comedians in the later films – like Frankie Howerd, Harry H Corbett and Phil Silvers – grated clumsily against the ensemble of regulars, here Leslie Phillips and Ted Ray blend seamlessly into the whole, assisted by a stronger storyline alluded to by several critics above.

Nowhere in the reviews quoted will you find any mention of who plays the pupils. But as with three out of four school films ever made, you have to look quickly in the playground shots for any sign of schoolchildren (or perhaps they were only midgets?). None of the ringleaders of the wrecking campaign is under 16, but chief among these is Stevens, played by Richard O'Sullivan, later a regular face in British television sitcoms himself. Of the others – every name on the cast overleaf from George Howell to Larry Dann – only Carol White is familiar, and she was 18. After the title role in Ken Loach's "**CATHY COME HOME**" for TV in 1963 she had a few successful feature films, such as "**POOR COW**" (67) but never found a part to equal her first notable one, and slid from sight.

O'Sullivan, 16, played more than his fair share of fractious English schoolboys. In "**IT'S GREAT TO BE YOUNG**" (56) he was the only token child in another school revolt, organised in protest at the sacking of a popular master (John Mills) and the banning of his school band. In "**THE WEBSTER BOY**" (61) he was a pupil singled out for victimisation by a sadistic master, and in "**SPARE THE ROD**" (61) he was a tearaway at an East End dustbin school where liberal teacher Max Bygraves fights a losing rearguard action (pun intended) against *cane 'em, cane 'em, and cane em' hard* advocate Geoffrey Keen. The original script made it clear that Keen's character derived a sexual gratification from laying into boys' buttocks with a rod, but the censors objected to such frankness, the project was shelved, and later shot with these "unhelpful" elements excised.

The tone of "**CARRY ON TEACHER**", mortar boards, gowns and all (akin to Jimmy Edwards' "**BOTTOMS UP!**" or the **ST. TRINIAN'S** farces), was already something of an anachronism in 1959, for all its nods toward "trendy" modern teaching theories. The climactic scene, where a school production of "*Romeo and Juliet*" acquires the dimensions of "**HELLZAPOPPIN**", will strike a familiar chord with anyone who's ever been involved in a school production, and while the general discomfiture of the staff (itching powder, electrified staffroom doorknob, tea laced with science lab alcohol, etc) will have raised approving sniggers when the film was shown at schools as an end of term treat, the dénouement, which reveals all the havoc to have been in the cause of retaining a cherished headmaster, will have drawn howls of indignant disbelief. Since when did you organise a school revolt *for love* of the headmaster? Pull the other one, Bunter!

Leslie Philips (who would have made an excellent **CARRY ON** regular), himself a former boy actor, dipped his suave toe into similar waters the following year with the farce "**NO KIDDING**", in which a couple foolishly start up a summer camp for well-to-do children.

See the later TV sitcom "**Please Sir**" – the closest comparable title – and subject index under **COMEDY** and [SCHOOL](#).