

## Vernon Samuels

### ■ Biography

Date of birth: 15th October 1964

Place of birth: St. Paul's, Bristol

Vernon was born at home in St Paul's, Bristol and lived there until his family moved to Fishponds four years later. He remembers that once he went to school, his teachers did not discriminate against him or his brother although they were the only Black pupils. However, some children bullied them in the playground because of their colour. The brothers challenged this and eventually the situation improved.



Vernon the Organisational and Personal Development Professional 1989 – Present

Photo courtesy of Vernon Samuels

Vernon enjoyed science lessons, but the greatest influence at school was his PE teacher, who noticed his special talent and encouraged him to work hard and to have self-belief. He believed that Vernon could be a successful athlete competing around the world. Vernon says he then felt motivated to try his best and also to improve all his work in school. This earned him success in the sport and he was also moved to a higher set for lessons leading to 'A' levels.

Vernon's success in athletics was in the triple jump, and this began at a very young age. He earned the title of All England Schools' Champion when he was just 14 years old, and he then represented England in the British Schools' Championships. Although he kept breaking records he didn't let the success go to his head, but remained focused. He says that the big influences in his life were his parents and his Christian faith. His father had been the first African-Caribbean person to become a bus driver in Bristol, and his mother became the first Black manager of a residential home for older people, and he says that their success through honest work and their words of encouragement always inspired him.

By the age of nineteen, he was an international athlete representing Great Britain. He performed alongside famous athletic idols like Tessa Sanderson and Linford Christie who became friends. Because of this success, he was invited by several American universities to train and study in the U.S.A. He accepted a place at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas in 1984, and studied Business and Psychology at the university, achieving a degree in 1988.

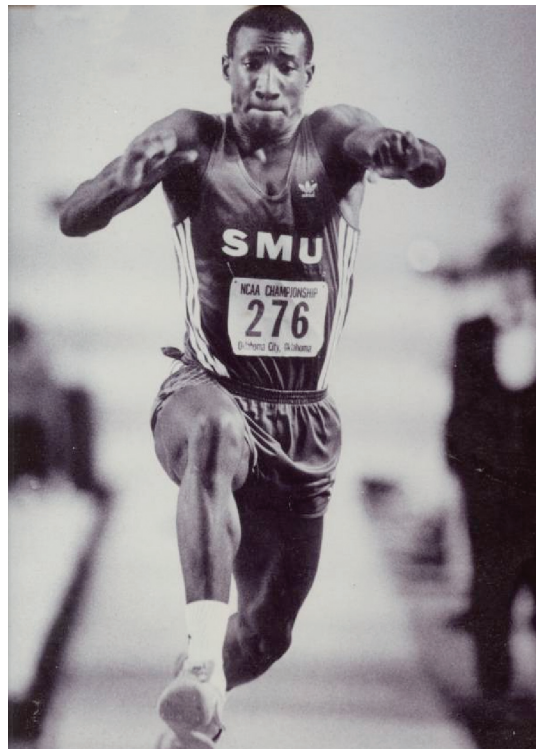
The same year that he graduated from university, Vernon was honoured to be made a member of the British Olympic Team. This was the high point of his international athletics career.

After buying a home and getting married, he decided to leave sports because he needed money to support his new family responsibilities. He therefore used his degree to begin a new career helping small businesses to develop.

Vernon also became involved in trying to improve the inner city, and set up and supported many projects like Sparkle Promotions, which helped young people. This work led to BBC Radio



Vernon at the Warm Weather Training Camp in Lanzarote, 1992  
Photo courtesy of Vernon Samuels



Vernon competing at the "Dallas Times Herald" International Competition, Dallas Texas, 1986.  
Photo courtesy of Vernon Samuels

Bristol inviting him to an interview to present the programme Black Echo on Radio Bristol, which is aimed at the city's Black community. Vernon presented the show for three years and found it very rewarding to speak to lots of different people and to be doing something so worthwhile.

Vernon is now a manager for Capacitybuilders, a project which works with the government to help local organisations to improve the lives of all people. He is pleased to have such a responsible and rewarding job, but is sad that there are not more Black people in similar management positions.

Vernon's message is:

“ Like the humble turtle, young people may feel like retreating into their shells, but they need to stick out their necks and to work hard to progress in life. Achievers are those people who consistently get out of bed to work steadily and to apply themselves to do well. ”

## Vernon Samuels

### ■ Teachers' Background Notes

Vernon was born at home in the inner city area of St. Paul's, Bristol and lived there until his family moved to the suburban area of Fishponds four years later. The teachers at his school in Fishponds did not overtly discriminate against him or his brother, the only Black pupils, but some children harassed them in the playground because of their colour. The brothers challenged the bullying and eventually the situation improved.

During his time at secondary school, Vernon enjoyed science lessons but the greatest influence at school was his PE teacher who saw his special talent in the triple jump and encouraged him to work hard and to have self-belief. He believed that Vernon could then go on to be a successful athlete competing around the world. Vernon felt motivated to try his best and also to improve all his work in school which earned him success in the sporting field and a move to a higher set for lessons, which led to him taking and passing 'A' levels.

Vernon's success in the triple jump began at a very young age. He earned the title of All-England Schools' Champion when he was just 14 years old and he then represented England in the British Schools' Championships. Although he kept breaking previously set records, he says that he didn't let the success go to his head but remained focused. Big influences on his life were his parents and his Christian faith. His father was the first African-Caribbean person to become a bus driver in Bristol and his mother became the first Black manager of a residential home for older people. Their success through honest work and their words of encouragement always inspired him.

By the age of nineteen Vernon was a senior international athlete representing Great Britain in the triple jump event. He performed alongside famous athletic idols, like Tessa Sanderson and Linford Christie, who became friends of his. Due to his success on the field, he was sought by several universities to train and study in the U.S.A. He accepted a place at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas in 1984 because he had heard that their coach trained the world's top triple jumper, Keith Connor. Vernon studied Business and Psychology at the university and achieved a degree in 1988.

The same year that he graduated from university, Vernon was honoured to be selected as a member of the 1988 British Olympic Team. This was the

high point of his international athletics career, which spanned ten years. After buying a home and getting married he decided to leave sports because it did not contribute financially to his new family responsibilities. He therefore used his Business Degree to begin a new career helping small businesses to develop. He enjoyed helping their founders to achieve more of their potential.

He also became involved in the field of inner-city regeneration and community development. He set up and supported many initiatives in Bristol including Sparkle Promotions, which he co-founded in 2000 to provide creative opportunities for youth development in the city. His involvement with inner-city communities led to BBC Radio Bristol inviting him to an interview to present the programme, Black Echo, aimed at the city's Black community. Vernon presented the show for three years and found it very rewarding to speak to lots of different people connected with Bristol's African-Caribbean communities and to be doing something so worthwhile.

Vernon is currently the Southwest Regional Manager for Capacitybuilders, which is a government initiative. Capacitybuilders work in partnership with the government and other bodies to help voluntary and community organisations to work more effectively to improve the quality of life for communities and the people within them. He is pleased to have such a responsible and rewarding job but saddened that there are not more Black people in similar managerial positions. He believes that the balance of power can change by opening up opportunities to talented people regardless of colour, which will benefit everyone.

Vernon's message is:

**“Like the humble turtle, young people may feel like retreating into their shells but they need to stick out their necks and to work hard to progress in life. Achievers are those people who consistently get out of bed to work steadily and to apply themselves to do well.”**

## Vernon Samuels

### ■ Suggested Activities

These are suggested activities based on Vernon Samuel's biography. The activities in bold print have a detailed lesson plan on following pages. Watch the DVD to see Bristol pupils from Glenfrome Primary and the City Academy interview Black Bristolian Vernon Samuels.

Foundation Stage/ KS1 Activities	KS2 Activities	KS3 Activities
<p><b>Gospel music in the Christian church</b> Listen to, explore feelings and ideas about the music. Learn a gospel song to share with parents/carers NB: Muslim families may not approve of their children learning gospel songs. Discuss this with parents first.</p>	<p><b>Fantastic paragraph</b> Use a photograph of Vernon in action as a sportsman to write a class descriptive paragraph. Choose descriptive words which are then put into sentences to create one class paragraph.</p>	<p><b>US Civil Rights Now/then</b> Compare US Civil Right Movement of the 1960s with present day. Focus on e.g. Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and the Million Man March/Louis Farrakhan. (History/PSHE).</p>
<p><b>Mystery?</b> Who is this person? Provide pupils with picture and clues to build up picture of Vernon Samuels.</p>	<p><b>Gospel music in the Christian church</b> Listen to some gospel music. Explore feelings and ideas about the music. Learn a gospel song – practise, rehearse and perform. See note on KS1 activity.</p>	<p><b>Christian beliefs</b> Compare Pentecostal practices with those of the Church of England/Roman Catholic e.g. style of worship, music, membership, celebrations.</p>
<p><b>Jumping</b> Activity in the hall or outside space – jumping high and jumping long. Show pupils the Triple Jump.</p>	<p><b>Olympics</b> Investigate history of the Olympics (linked with Greek study) Design class Olympic events.</p>	<p><b>Radio</b> Survey of radio stations listened to by pupils/others in the community. Analysis of different audience and style. (Media Studies).</p>

\*See the resource list for details

# Vernon Samuels

KS1

2:13

## ■ Lesson Plan: Who is this man?

(History, Thinking skills)

### Learning objectives

- To develop investigative and collaborative skills.
- To learn that Black and minority ethnic (BME) people have contributed to the field of sport and been recognised.

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Key words/phrases	Resources	Organisation/Grouping
Question words – who, why, what, when, where	Biography and pictures Clues (see activity)	Whole class Groups

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### Suggested activities

- Provide pupils with clues about Vernon Samuels. Clues could include a map of Bristol with St. Paul's and Fishponds marked, P.E. bag, 'A' level certificates, trophy, pictures of the Olympic rings or a photo of an award ceremony, American flag, a radio.
- Pupils to investigate the mystery 'Who is this man?' Teacher to support pupils by reminding them of question words – why, where, when, etc. and prompting them to make links between items.
- Share pupils' findings, focusing on how they used the evidence and their justification. Provide talking frames such as:  
'We think he is..... because.....'.  
'We don't agree with that group because.....'.
- As a class come to some agreement about some answers to the question.
- Share Vernon Samuel's biography with pupils.

### Plenary

- Discuss investigative skills, thinking skills and listening skills.
- Discuss issues arising from the biography.

### Learning outcomes/Success criteria

- Pupils know about Vernon Samuel's life and his contribution to Bristol.
- Pupils know that BME people have contributed to the field of sport.
- Pupils can use collaborative and investigative skills effectively.

### Assessment opportunities

Listening and language of reasoning.

### Homework task or Parent/Carer involvement

Ask parents/carers what sports they played or play.

\*See the resource list for details

# Vernon Samuels

## ■ Lesson Plan: Fantastic describing words (Literacy)

### Learning objectives

- To hear and use a wide range of descriptive words.
- To use these words to create sentences and then a paragraph
- To know about Black and minority ethnic achievements in sports in the U.K. and the world.

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Key words/phrases	Resources	Organisation/Grouping
Descriptive words	Biography and picture	Four or eight groups
Sentence	Picture – one up on whiteboard	
Paragraph	or small pictures for all	

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### Suggested activities

- Read Vernon Samuel's biography with the pupils.
- Ensure pupils have access to one of the photos of him in action either small copies or ideally on a white board.
- Ask one group to choose words to describe his face, one group to choose words to describe his legs, one group to choose words to describe his arms, one group to choose words to describe his clothes.
- The groups then put the words into sentences, then the groups join together to create a paragraph which describes the photograph using fantastic descriptive words.

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### Plenary

- Class to share and/or display this fantastic collaborative paragraph with parents/carers, headteacher or another class.

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### Learning outcomes/Success criteria

- Pupils can recognise the benefits of working and talking together.
- Pupils have created a fantastic paragraph.
- Pupils know about the life of Vernon Samuels and his contribution to Bristol and sport in the UK.

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### Assessment opportunities

Vocabulary – descriptive words.

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### Homework task or Parent/Carer involvement

Pupils to retell Vernon's achievements at home.

\*See the resource list for details

## ■ Lesson Plan: Christian Beliefs (RE/PSHE)

### Learning objectives

- To know about different Christian beliefs.
- To know similarities and differences between the Pentecostal movement and the Church of England or Roman Catholic beliefs.
- To know that Black and minority ethnic people contribute to Bristol.

Key words/phrases	Resources	Organisation/Grouping
Christian/Christianity	Vernon Samuel's biography and picture.	Whole class
Pentecostal	Information on Pentecostal, Church of England and Roman Catholic beliefs.	Groups
Church of England		
Roman Catholic Beliefs	Matters of Faith folder – Bristol SACRE*	
Faith Movement		

### Suggested activities

- Read/share Vernon Samuel's biography and pictures.
  - In pairs talk about beliefs/what shapes our beliefs e.g. family, cultural traditions, environment, politics etc.
  - Using information provided on Pentecostal, Church of England and Roman Catholic movements, make a comparative chart under the following headings: Style of worship, music/instruments, becoming a member.
  - In groups of three or four discuss which of the above movements Black or white people are more likely to be involved in and give reasons why.
- (Ensure pupils are aware that most Christian groups have mixed congregations.)

### Plenary

- Share main points of group discussion with whole class.

### Learning outcomes/Success criteria

- Pupils will know about Christian beliefs.
- Pupils will know similarities and differences between different movements in Christianity.
- Pupils will know about Vernon Samuel and his contribution to Bristol.

### Assessment opportunities

RE

### Homework task or Parent/Carer involvement

Talk about family beliefs.

\*See the resource list for details

## Vernon Samuels

### ■ Resources

- Matters of Faith folder - Bristol SACRE
- Some themes/subjects covered during his interview featured on the DVD are: Jamaican identity/culture, racism, bullying, aspirations, achievement, athletics, work in the community.

#### Contact details

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Willing to be contacted by teachers for further questions? Yes

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Willing to come into school to talk to pupils? Yes

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