

Free Technical Site Visits; workmanship disputes

All Part of the Service

It is sometimes necessary for Contractor Members to seek an independent review of the work their company has undertaken, or there is some other question of technical adequacy on site.

Technical Site Visits are a valuable service that FPDC offers its contractor members to review technical aspects of their work and workmanship. This service is offered free of charge to contractor members and on occasion made available as a chargeable service to others.

Making use of its wide range of experience in the drywall, plastering and screeding sectors, FPDC can investigate and report with authority, drawing on years of expertise and knowledge of established Standards.

Visits are undertaken by Steve Halcrow, FPDC's Technical Consultant.

Experience has shown the value of contractor input and for this reason a senior contractor member representative (independent of the requesting company), may also be invited to give input.

Report Provided to the Member

Each visit is followed by a formal report setting out the findings and recommendations as appropriate. Site visits help us to keep in touch with issues affecting members and is a two way learning opportunity. The report does look to provide an impartial commentary on the work and may well refer to areas of remedial work necessary, if required.

FPDC prides itself with providing quality impartial guidance. Technical Site Visits give an independent view on workmanship and technical aspects which often help clarify and resolve issues. FPDC does not act as a Construction Mediator or Arbitrator.

FPDC Membership Criteria

As part of the membership criteria we can say that all FPDC members have access to third party inspection of workmanship, if needed to resolve a dispute.

If you would like to ask FPDC to undertake a Technical Site Visit for you or have further questions, please contact the FPDC office and speak to Paul Jessop on 020 7634 9481, or e-mail paul.jessop@fpdc.org.

SAMPLE FPDC Technical Report – Respite Centre, Anytown

Report Scope: Assessment of finishes of plastered walls and ceilings

Contract: Respite Centre,
1 Somewhere Close, Anytown.

Specialist Contractor: Unknown Plastering Limited

Client: Anytown County Council

Main Contractor: Feasible Ltd.

Date of Visit: 23 October 2009

Those present:

Unknown Plastering Ltd: Simon Pieman

Feasible Limited: Mr B, Contract Surveyor

FPDC: Steve Halcrow - Technical Consultant

Introduction

The project is a new detached building, which contains a number of residential rooms with their own bathroom facilities, residents lounge, staff facilities, and kitchen.

Unknown Plastering have plastered all walls and boarded and skimmed all ceilings. They were concerned that the contract was being unreasonably snagged and had been asked to undertake far more corrective work than they considered justified. They had undertaken corrective work in certain areas and considered that the standard of work was acceptable.

They had therefore invited the FPDC to offer independent comment on the general quality of the finish of their work.

Background

Standard of finish

The central issue in this case is quality of the finished surfaces.

EN 13914 – 2: 2005 Design considerations and essential principles for internal plastering states in section 4.7 –

Whatever the plastering system and finish and however skilled and conscientious the operative, plastering is a craft and it should be appreciated that it is not possible to achieve a completely smooth and true surface finish. Painting will tend to reveal any inherent surface irregularities. These minor imperfections will be highlighted when gloss or semi-gloss paints are used, particularly when the plasterwork is subjected to intense or shallow angle lighting.

Therefore these types of finishes and lighting require special additional measures to be taken. Otherwise, the consequential minor irregularities will have to be accepted.

Inspection of work for acceptance

It is established best practice derived from current codes that inspection of work for acceptance is undertaken from a position perpendicular to the surface, under normal lighting conditions. Typically, this position is 2 m from the surface of the wall, and in smaller rooms, areas typical for the intended use of the room, which are the entrance and the centre of most residential rooms.

It is not considered appropriate to view plaster surfaces for visible defects for acceptance purposes by close examination of the surface or by using narrow incident light.

Plasterwork should be inspected for acceptance prior to hand over for decoration. Any such inspection should ideally be jointly undertaken based upon the recommendation of relevant standards, with a joint record of any defects identified.

In this case, some of the rooms (studios 1 – 4 inclusive) were decorated fully before any snags were identified to Unknown Plastering.

Responsibility for minor defects

There needs to be clarity on the defects that the plastering contractor is responsible for, and for minor defects that the decorator will deal with as part of decoration.

It must always be expected that a certain amount of preparation and making good will be required as part of decoration. This point is covered in standards, including -

BS 6150: 2006 Painting of buildings – code of practice states –

8.6.2 Surface preparation and priming of plaster

8.6.2.1 Cleaning

Dirt and loose surface deposits should be removed by dry brushing. Plaster nibs and splashes should be scraped off, care being taken to avoid damaging the surface.

8.6.2.3 Stopping and filling

Cracks, holes and surface imperfections should be stopped and filled with plaster, water-mixed filler, or in cement plasters, with masonry cement, before application of first or priming coats.

Inspection

An inspection was carried out on all rooms. The building is complete, and decoration has been applied to all areas. We were directed by Unknown Plastering to focus upon the standard of finish provided by them.

It was confirmed at the commencement of the inspection that there were no special provisions for standards of smoothness or flatness of the plastered finish in the contract, as recommended in **BS EN 13914**. The walls were originally specified to be finished in matt emulsion paint.

However, following the plastering being undertaken, the client had changed the finish to vinyl silk emulsion which has now been changed back to a matt finish.

The rooms have natural lighting. The weather was bright and sunny.

For the purposes of this review, reference is made in this report to relevant British and European Standards, with extracts included for ease of reference.

The viewing conditions used in the inspection are as recommended as best practice in **BS EN 13914** – viewed from the middle of the room, or from a distance of 2m, at right angle to the surface

Inspection findings

Lounge

Minor finishing defects were identified on close inspection which, as set out in the relevant standards, should be the decorator's responsibility. No defects were identified that should be for the plasterer to rectify.

An electrical box fitted to the rear wall was standing proud of the wall surface. This needs to be adjusted, but is not the responsibility of the plasterer.

Kitchen

The junction of the sloping ceiling with the vertical wall surface (on wall adjacent to the hallway) was not perfect for line, but considered to be within tolerance.

This junction between the sloping and vertical wall section over the entrance door to the hall should be made good by the decorator.

Utility room

No comments

Staff Room

Some minor making good is required to be done by the decorator

Studio 1

Minor blemishes were identified that the decorator should attend to.

Studio 2

Some shrinkage has occurred around the base of the rooflight encasement at the junction with the ceiling. This has clearly occurred since the ceiling was skimmed and needs to be made good as a maintenance item – not a plastering item.

Studio 3

The vertical junctions between walls at less than 90 degrees adjacent to the entrance door were not considered perfect, but considered to be acceptable.

Studio 4

The horizontal bead to the top of the window opening was slightly out of level, but considered to be within tolerance.

Recommendations

Responsibilities

The responsibilities for standards of finish should be clearly established between the main contractor, the decorating contractor and the dry lining contractor, based upon the recommendations in related standards.

Acceptance of work

A joint inspection of work finished by the dry lining contractor, as part of a handover process, and joint agreement on any corrective work required should be implemented. This should be based upon inspection of the work using the approaches set out in the Standards referred to in this report.

Sign off

It is also important that any corrected rooms are signed off to confirm their acceptability, and that any work caused by subsequent damage or rework for example, are extra costs, and not to be treated as the direct responsibility of the drylining contractor.

Conclusion

Based upon the standards of workmanship as set out in the relevant codes, the overall quality of finish of the plaster work was to a good commercial standard.

The use of a vinyl silk finish to the walls had obviously identified imperfections in the plaster. As the codes confirm, this must be expected with a gloss paint unless specific measures are taken to maintain a very high standard of surface finish, which the contract did not ask for. By the time of the inspection, most of the walls had been repainted with matt finish which had minimised many of the earlier concerns.

However, the plastering contractor has been tasked with undertaking minor defects in the plaster finish, rather than these being dealt with as decorator's items.

There were no finishing defects identified during the inspection requiring rework by the plastering contractor.

For and on behalf of the FPDC,

Steve Halcrow

FPDC Technical Consultant