

Standards for plaster finish

Comments on installation of plastering need reference points from which to measure judgments:

BS EN 13914-2:2005 Design, preparation and application of external rendering and internal plastering. Design considerations and essential principles for internal plastering. This Code of practice provides guidance on the flatness of plaster finish, application, design and inspection of plaster systems.

Other standards that should be used when considering standards for a plaster skim finish:

- **BS EN 13964-2014** is the recently published current definitive standard for the manufacture and installation of suspended systems.
- **BS 8212 1995** Code of practice for Drylining and Partitioning using Gypsum Plasterboard and **BS 8000 Part 8 1994** Workmanship on building sites - Code of practice for plasterboard partitions & linings & **BS 5234-1 1992** Partitions (including matching linings)- Part 1 Code of practice for design and installation, are the current definitive standards for the installation of drylining systems.

The flatness of the plastered finish will depend on the accuracy to which the background has been constructed and the thickness of the plaster specified. Thinner applications of plaster such as 2mm skim coats will only overcome minor irregularities or small deviations from the line of the background. In general, no tolerance can be laid down for a skim coat plaster since this will closely follow the contour of the background. It is imperative that the accuracy and tolerances of the background to the plastered surfaces is given special attention.

Where there are no specific enhanced tolerances are specified; it would be standard practice to use the tolerances stated for the drylining and ceiling specification and in BS 8212 and BS EN 13964 as the standard to be achieved for the skim. e.g. This would allow the finished face of a partition to be installed within a BS 8212 deviation band of 10mm (+/- 5mm).

It is essential that the contractor establishes a benchmark for the quality of finish which can be referred to throughout the contract.

In Chapter 1.2 the **NHBC standards 'A consistent approach to finishes'** it states that wall and ceiling finishes shall have an appropriate appearance and surfaces should be reasonably uniform, although there may be minor textural differences around lights and other fittings. It goes on to state that jointing tapes should be fully covered and not obtrusive in the finished wall or ceiling surface. Under the section 'Other surfaces and finishes' the NHBC refer to inspecting works from 2m and not be shinning artificial light onto the surface. Wall lights and up lights should also be switched off.

BS EN 13914-2 goes on to state that '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 where the plasterwork is subjected to intense or shallow lighting.

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

In addition to flatness of a plastered surface there is also a standard of smooth finish is defined in **BS EN 13914-2** and these are described as Levels 1 to 4:

Where there are no specifications on the project for the drylining and plastering, **BS EN 13914-2** recommends that if the level of smoothness is not specified Level 1 should be assumed.

Level 1	for use in areas where finish is not critical
Level 2	to receive a textured wallpaper or a textured wallcovering or a textured paint
Level 3	to receive a matt paint or smooth wallpaper or smooth wallcovering
Level 4	to receive a semi-gloss paint and/or with glancing illumination ⁵⁾

Where there is glancing illumination, additional measures will be required and this should be specified.

The natural glancing light, such as from full height windows, should be known by a main contractor/designer and therefore consideration to this should be made and included in a specification. It is known that the general level of illumination will have a critical effect on the appearance of the finished plaster surface and therefore the temporary lighting conditions on site during application of the plaster should simulate the same or higher lighting conditions produced by the final permanent installation.

The angle of illumination will also accentuate minor imperfections and the direction of the supplementary lighting should also be adjustable.

BS EN 13914-2 states that contract documentation should specify if the final lighting of any surface is to fall at glancing angles. The main contractor/designer would be fully aware of any onerous natural lighting. The BS goes on to state that in situations under glancing light this would consist of working under special conditions.

When inspecting the quality of the finished plaster, **BS EN 13914 -2** advises that works should be inspected for acceptance from positions normally used in adjacent areas. This is normally from an entrance doorway and from the centre of a room in a domestic house and from about 2m away from the surface in larger areas.

Decorator's preparatory work Surfaces should be cleaned of all dirt, dust, plaster splashes and other foreign matter. Minor defects such as pinholes, paper scuffs and damage should be made good and all stopping and filling carried out. Where movement has disturbed the original stopping treatment of screws and nails, additional preparatory work should be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of **BS 6150**. The need for this additional preparatory work may not become evident until after the application of the first coat of decoration.

Where surfaces are re-painted locally after any snagging, this can result in patterns in the paint finish. Re painting the entire surface after snagging can potentially eliminate this and provide a more consistent finish.

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