

Vigilant Surveys

DAMP AND MOULD INVESTIGATION

Upper floor flat, North London

Address withheld

Prepared for the client

Inspected October 2026

Specimen report

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SPECIMEN REPORT

This is a real Vigilant Surveys damp and mould report, published with the written permission of the client it was written for. The name, the address, the postcode, the reference and the exact date of the inspection have been removed, along with nine photographs: the room views that show the client's belongings, the views out of the windows that would place the building, and two with handwritten notes. Every reading, every finding and every recommendation is exactly as it was issued.

Summary in plain English

OVERALL RATING 3 OF 9

Condensation from the single glazed steel framed windows: on the glass, running down onto the sills, and on the plaster of the reveals where it meets the cold steel frame, a cold bridge.

The mould is very probably caused by condensation from the windows. Single glass in steel frames gets very cold in winter, so moisture in the air turns to water on the glass and runs down onto the sills. The steel frame also chills the plaster right beside it, so water forms there too, and that is where the mould grows. It is not rain getting in, not a leak and not rising damp, and the walls away from the windows are dry.

The mould is limited to the window surrounds and one spot behind the desk. It is a symptom, very probably of moist air meeting cold glass and steel, so cleaning it alone will not stop it coming back.

What fixes it is taking moisture out of the air and keeping air moving: a dehumidifier sized for each room in the colder months, opening the windows wide for a few minutes each morning, and keeping furniture off the outside walls. Once that is in place, clean the mould, replace the mouldy sealant around the frames and repaint the reveals.

Confidence

Highly probable on the evidence

What would settle it	A recheck in cold weather, or a few weeks of logged temperature and humidity in each room through the winter, with surface temperatures taken on the glass, the frames and the reveals on a cold morning and compared with the dew point.
The overall rating is a judgement on the whole of the findings, not a meter reading. 1 is the lowest and 9 the highest. Green 1 to 3, amber 4 to 6, red 7 to 9.	
1	Dry throughout. Nothing found.
2	Dry, with a minor defect worth putting right as good practice.
3	Dry, with a defect that could lead to damp if left.
4	Elevated moisture from a single identified cause, with no work to the structure needed.
5	Elevated moisture in more than one area, no damage, correctable with general maintenance.
6	An active damp problem with a clear cause, correctable with ordinary repairs.
7	Active damp causing damage to the building, or several causes acting together.
8	Widespread damp with significant damage, or a cause not yet identified.
9	Severe, spreading or causing structural damage. Needs attention before anything else.

Instruction and conditions

Instructed by	The client
Reason for the inspection	Condensation and mould around the period steel framed windows and at the skirting. An assessment of what is causing it and how far it has gone.
Scope	Focused survey, one problem area. Focused survey: the living room, bedroom 1 and the home office, the three rooms where the problem is showing, inspected inside, with moisture, temperature and humidity readings and thermal imaging.
Date of inspection	October 2026
Weather at inspection	Dry
Rainfall in the previous 48 hours	Not recorded
External conditions	21.4°C, 50.7% RH, dew point 10.8°C
Access	Owner

What the occupier reports

Recorded as given at the inspection. This is the occupier's account and is not a finding.

Condensation and mould around the period steel framed windows and at the skirting, worse in the winter.

Pattern reported	Worse in winter
How it presents	Visible mould, Condensation on glazing
Anything that changed it	None recorded
Previously advised by	Nobody
Washing dried indoors	Not known
Tumble dryer	Not known

The property

Type	Purpose built flat
Approximate age	Not recorded
Wall construction	not established
Ground floor	Unknown
Heating	not recorded, how it is used not known

Room by room

This was a focused survey, covering the affected rooms and anything contributing to the cause. Other rooms were not surveyed. Moisture readings are comparative. %WME is not a moisture content, so readings are given against a control taken in an unaffected area of the same room.

Living room

Photograph removed
for this specimen copy

ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	23°C, 60.6% RH
Dew point	15°C

Coldest surface measured	23.4°C at External wall under window
Surface against dew point	8.4°C ABOVE Condensation excluded on this surface at the time of inspection.
Thermal scan	NO ANOMALY Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 23.4°C, air 23°C, 60.6% RH.

VENTILATION

Background ventilation	Opening windows
Trickle vents	None fitted
Mechanical extract	Not recorded
Door undercut	Under 10mm, measured 4mm

MOISTURE

Floor in this room	not established
Control reading	8 %WME. Internal wall, away from the windows

MOULD TO THE WINDOW SEALANT AND REVEALS

Surface	Reveal
Whereabouts	Window reveals, sills and the sealant at the frames
Observed	Peeling paint, Mould
Reading on it	14.9 %WME Left side of window reveal against a control of 8
Reading on it	7.6 %WME Right side of window reveal against a control of 8

OBSERVED

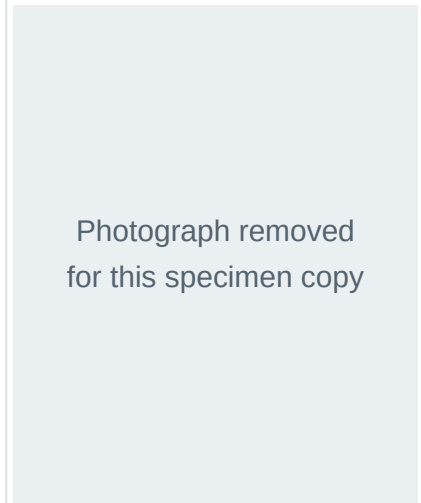
Visible mould	Trace
Other observations	Condensation on glazing



METER SHOWING THE READING



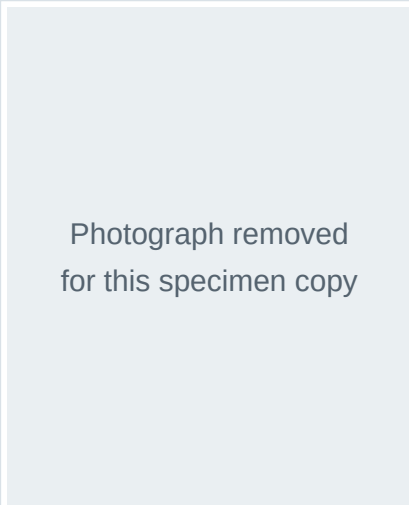
METER SHOWING THE READING



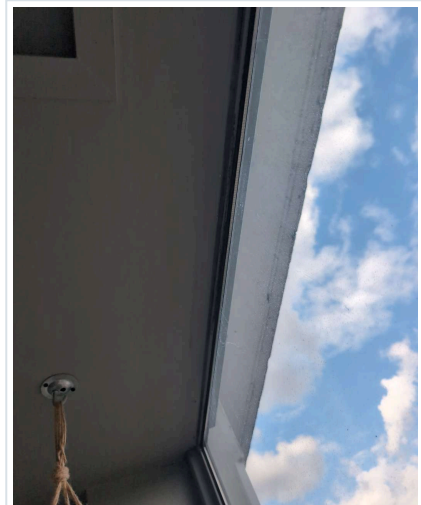
WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



DEFECT



DEFECT



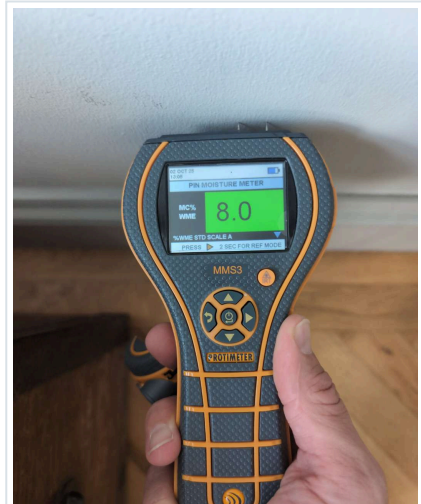
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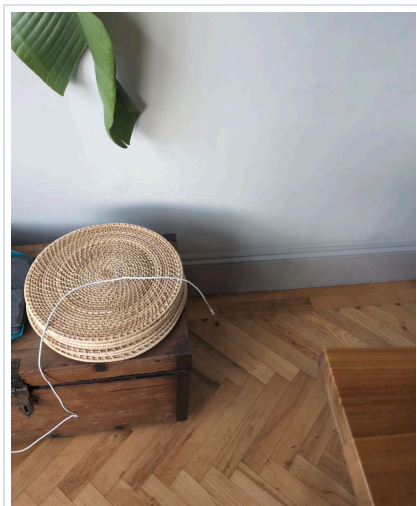
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METER IN POSITION



CONTROL LOCATION

Bedroom 1

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ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	24.5°C, 58.2% RH
Dew point	15.7°C
Coldest surface measured	22.9°C at External wall under window
Surface against dew point	7.2°C ABOVE Condensation excluded on this surface at the time of inspection.
Thermal scan	NO ANOMALY Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 22.9°C, air 24.5°C, 58.2% RH.

VENTILATION

Background ventilation	Opening windows
Trickle vents	None fitted
Mechanical extract	None
Door undercut	Under 10mm

MOISTURE

Floor in this room	not established
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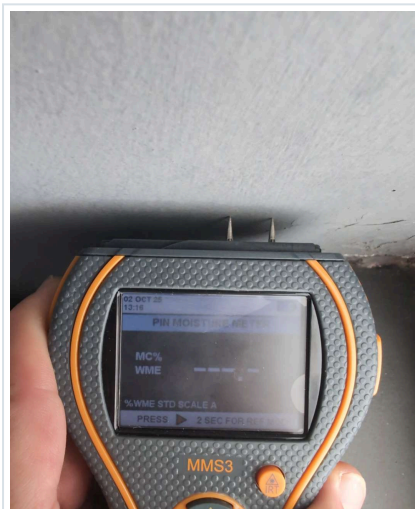
Control reading	8.2 %WME. Internal partition wall to the home office
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MOULD AND STAINING TO THE WINDOW REVEALS

Surface	Reveal
Whereabouts	Window reveals and the sealant at the frames
Observed	Peeling paint
Reading on it	LO Below 6 %WME, the lower limit of the meter. Window reveal, beside the frame
Reading on it	LO Below 6 %WME, the lower limit of the meter. Window reveal, beside the frame

OBSERVED

Visible mould	Trace
Other observations	Mould to reveals, Condensation on glazing



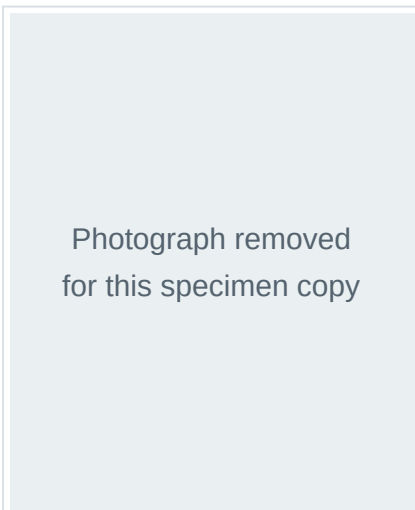
METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



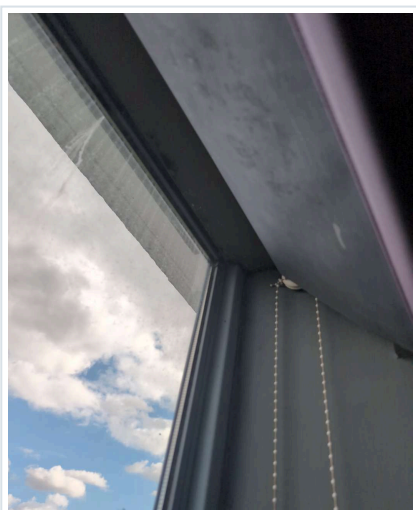
METER SHOWING THE READING



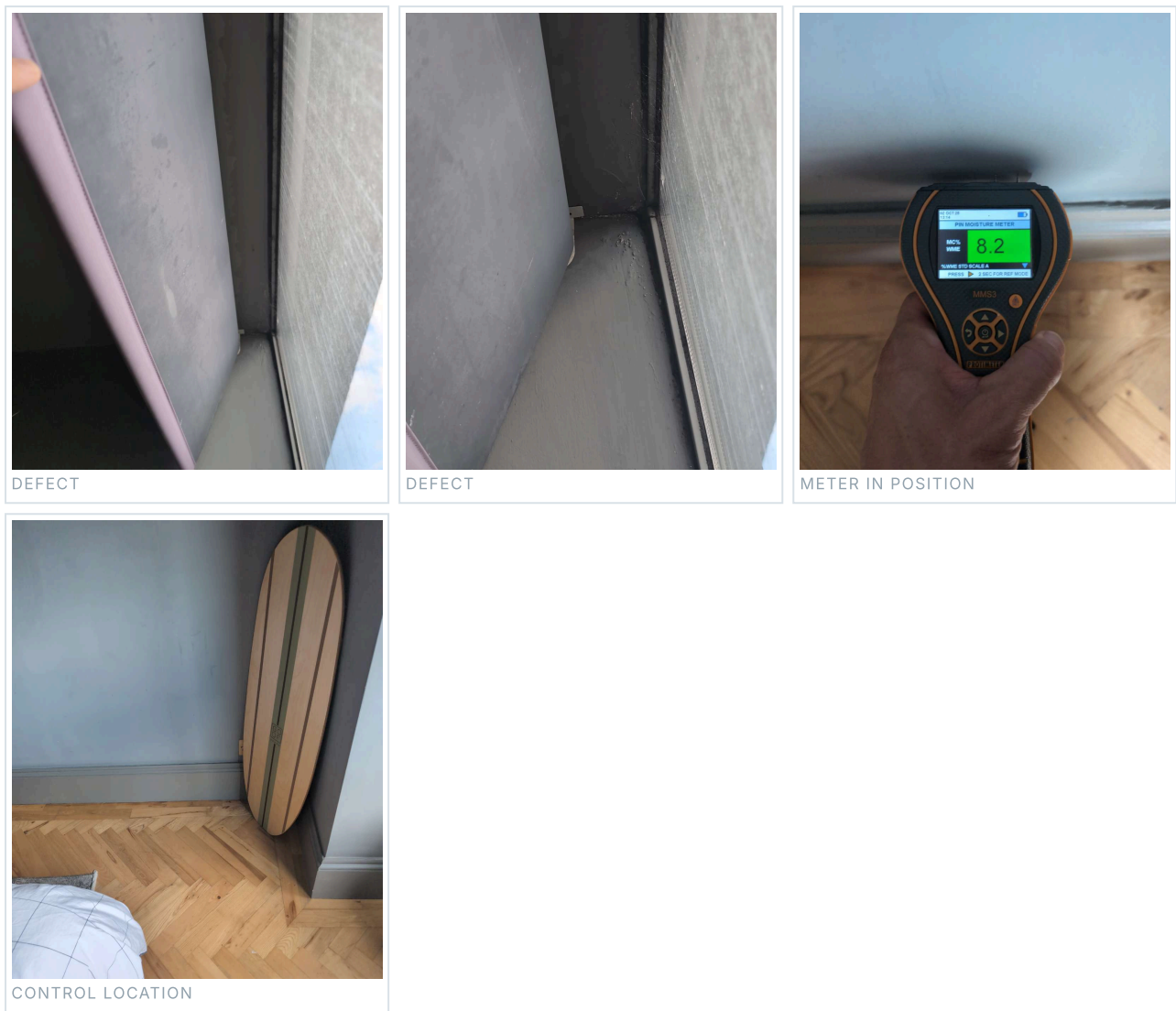
WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



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Home office



ENVIRONMENT

Air temperature and humidity	25.5°C, 57.5% RH
Dew point	16.5°C
Coldest surface measured	21.6°C at External wall under desk
Surface against dew point	5.1°C ABOVE Condensation excluded on this surface at the time of inspection.

Thermal scan	NO ANOMALY Scanned with a thermal imaging camera, surface 21.6°C, air 25.5°C, 57.5% RH.
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VENTILATION

Background ventilation	Opening windows
Trickle vents	None fitted
Mechanical extract	None
Door undercut	Under 10mm, measured 4mm

MOISTURE

Floor in this room	not established
Control reading	7.3 %WME. Internal partition wall to bedroom 1

MOULD, STAINING AND PEELING PAINT TO THE WINDOW REVEALS

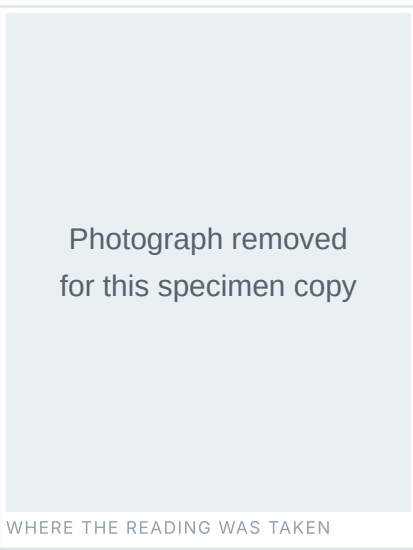
Surface	Reveal
Whereabouts	Window reveals, and the external wall behind the desk
Observed	Peeling paint, Mould, Staining
Reading on it	LO Below 6 %WME, the lower limit of the meter. Window reveal, beside the frame

OBSERVED

Visible mould	Trace
Other observations	Peeling paint, Mould to reveals



METER SHOWING THE READING



WHERE THE READING WAS TAKEN



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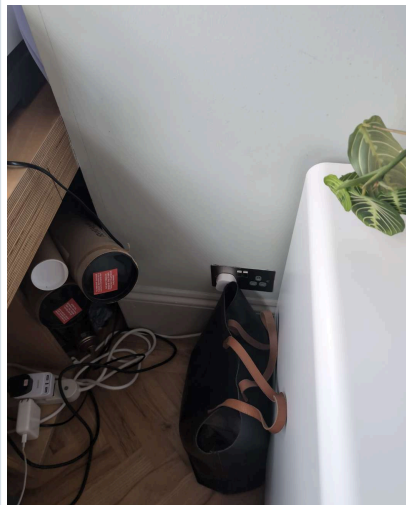
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METER IN POSITION



CONTROL LOCATION

THERMAL IMAGING

All accessible rooms were scanned with a thermal imaging camera under the conditions recorded above. no anomaly was found in Living room, Bedroom 1, Home office.

What was considered, and what was ruled out

Every mechanism that could produce these readings is judged on the evidence, not selected at the start. What has been excluded matters as much as what has not.

MECHANISM	VERDICT	EVIDENCE
Surface condensation	SUPPORTED	The windows are single glazed in steel frames, so in cold weather the glass and the frames run far colder than the room and moisture in the air condenses on them. The water runs down onto the sills and into the bottom corners, which is where the mould is heaviest. The pattern is the same in all three rooms and is worse in the winter.
Bridging or construction defect	SUPPORTED	Steel conducts heat many times faster than plaster. Where the steel frame meets the plaster of the reveal, the reveal is cooled along the junction, a cold bridge, and condensation forms on the plaster there. The mould follows the frame line on every reveal.
Penetrating damp, wind driven rain	EXCLUDED	The inspection was in dry weather, so this rests on the pattern rather than a wet day. The reveals read at or below the control readings of 7.3 to 8.2 %WME, below the range of the meter in the bedroom and the office, except the left living room reveal at 14.9, which is still in the dry band and sits where condensation runs off the glass into the corner. The mould follows the frame line on every window in three rooms, which is the pattern of condensation, not of rain finding one way in.
Penetrating damp, building defect	EXCLUDED	No staining, tide marks or elevated readings away from the frames. The damage follows the window junctions in every room rather than any one point in the building.
Rising damp	EXCLUDED	The flat is on an upper floor, and the damage is at the windows, not the base of the walls.
Plumbing or drainage leak	EXCLUDED	There are no water services near any of the affected areas.
Interstitial condensation	EXCLUDED	The walls are of solid construction with no lining in which condensation could form unseen, and the readings away from the frames match the controls.
Historic or residual moisture	EXCLUDED	No sign of an earlier event. The mould is fresh at the frame lines and returns each winter.
Salt contamination of plaster	EXCLUDED	No salt deposits were seen, and the readings are at or close to the controls.

Technical findings

The living room, bedroom 1 and the home office of this upper floor flat were inspected in October 2026, the three rooms where the problem is showing. It was dry, with 21.4 degrees and 50.7 per cent relative humidity outside. Readings were taken with a pin meter in %WME, a thermal camera, a hygrometer and a surface thermometer. All three rooms have single glazed windows in steel frames, window ventilation only, no trickle vents, and doors undercut by about 4mm.

The living room. Black mould runs along the sealant where the steel frames meet the plaster and the sills, and onto parts of the reveals, heaviest in the bottom corners where water running off the glass collects. There is some peeling paint. The left reveal reads 14.9 %WME where the mould is heaviest, the right reveal 7.6, against a control of 8.0 on an internal wall.

Bedroom 1. Mould and staining to the window reveals and along the sealant, the same pattern as the living room. Both reveal readings were below the range of the meter, against a control of 8.2 on the partition to the office.

The home office. Mould, staining and peeling paint to the window reveals, the same pattern again. The reveal reading was below the range of the meter, against a control of 7.3 on the partition to the bedroom. Mould also forms low on the external wall behind the desk, where furniture and boxes stand hard against it. That wall was the coldest surface found in the room, at 21.6 degrees.

What the pattern shows. The mould follows the line of the steel frames in every room, and the plaster away from the frames reads at or below the controls. Single glass and steel both lose heat fast, so in cold weather the glass and the frames run far colder than the room. Moisture in the air condenses on the glass and runs down onto the sills and into the corners. The steel also cools the plaster it touches, a cold bridge along the junction, so condensation forms on the reveal beside the frame as well. That is where the mould grows, and why it is worse in the winter. The sealant at the frames now holds mould within it, which will not clean out.

Condensation on the day. The living room was at 23.0 degrees and 60.6 per cent, a dew point of 15.0 degrees, bedroom 1 at 24.5 degrees and 58.2 per cent, and the office at 25.5 degrees and 57.5 per cent. On a mild day every coldest surface measured was 5.1 to 8.4 degrees above the dew point, so no condensation was forming at the inspection. The vapour pressure inside ran from 1.70 to 1.88 kPa against 1.29 kPa outside, an excess of 0.41 to 0.58 kPa. As an indication from a single visit, that is a fair amount of moisture in the air for a day when the windows can be opened, and in cold weather the same moisture meets glass and steel at outside temperature. This is a dry day inspection of a winter problem, so the conclusion is drawn from the pattern of the damage and the readings rather than condensation seen forming.

Other causes. There is no sign of rain getting in: the reveals read dry, with no tide marks or staining away from the frames, and the mould follows the frame line on every window rather than one point of entry. There are no water services near the affected areas, no salts, and the flat is on an upper floor.

Conclusion

On the evidence it is highly probable, though not confirmed on a dry day, that the mould is caused by condensation from the single glazed steel framed windows. Water condenses on the cold glass and runs onto the sills, and the cold steel frames chill the plaster of the reveals beside them, a cold bridge, so condensation forms there too. It is not rain getting in, not a leak and not rising damp.

The windows themselves are the cold surface, so this will recur each winter for as long as single glazed steel frames are in place. What can be done is to take moisture out of the air, keep air moving past the windows, and make the reveals and sealant hold less mould. A correctly sized dehumidifier in each room, regular ventilation, better air movement under the doors and furniture kept off the external walls all lower the moisture that reaches those cold surfaces.

The order matters. Get the moisture down first, then clean the mould, replace the sealant at the frames and redecorate the reveals. Redecorating before the moisture is controlled will see the mould come back in the first cold spell.

Recommendations

Vigilant Surveys carries out no remedial work and holds no contractor ties. No quantities or prices are given, so these can be put to any contractor for pricing.

Urgent

Actively causing damage, getting worse, or preventing other work from succeeding.

Severe

A material cause of the problem. The property will not dry until it is dealt with.

Moderate

Contributes to the problem, or should be put right as good practice.

Monitor

No action indicated on the evidence so far. Keep it under observation, and act if it changes or if it has not improved once the work above is done.

Cosmetic

Appearance only. Not a necessary measure.

These are ordered by priority, not by date. We do not set timetables, because the right sequence depends on access, on the works programme and on what the further investigation finds.

1. **Run a quiet dehumidifier in each of the three rooms through the colder months, sized to the room: a 12 litre a day unit in the living room, and a 10 litre a day unit in bedroom 1 and in the home office.**

Suitable trade: The owner can do this.

MODERATE The windows will always be the coldest surface in the room, so lowering the moisture in the air is the most effective way to stop it condensing on the glass, the frames and the reveals. The sizes come from the room measurements taken on the day: about 89, 51 and 38 cubic metres. Look for a sound level of around 40 dB or less on the lower setting and a built in humidistat, set to hold the room at 50 to 55 per cent with the door closed. On the day the rooms were at 57.5 to 60.6 per cent.

2. **In cold weather, open the windows wide for five to ten minutes first thing each morning, and leave a window slightly open where it is safe to do so. Wipe the glass and sills dry each morning when condensation has formed.**

Suitable trade: The owner can do this.

MODERATE With no trickle vents, the windows are the only ventilation in these rooms. A short, full opening clears the moist air built up overnight, and wiping the water away stops it soaking into the sealant and the reveals.

3. **Increase the gap under the doors to these rooms to around 10mm.**

Suitable trade: A carpenter or joiner.

MODERATE The doors are undercut by about 4mm. A gap of around 10mm, the figure in the Building Regulations guidance, lets air move between rooms when the doors are closed so moist air does not sit in one room.

4. **Keep furniture and stored boxes a hand's width off the external walls, in particular behind the desk in the home office.**

Suitable trade: The owner can do this.

MODERATE Furniture against a cold external wall stops warm air reaching the surface behind it, so it stays cold and mould grows there. This is what is happening behind the desk.

5. **Clean the mould on the reveals, sills and walls with detergent and water or a mould and mildew cleaner, and dry thoroughly. Bleach is not needed; removing the growth is what matters.**

Suitable trade: The owner or a decorator.

MODERATE Removing the growth now stops it spreading while the moisture is brought under control.

6. **Once the moisture is under control, cut out the mould stained silicone where the frames meet the plaster and the sills, and reseal with a silicone containing a mould inhibitor.**

Suitable trade: A mastic specialist, often listed as a mastic applicator.

MODERATE Mould grows into silicone and cannot be cleaned out of it, so it will stay stained and regrow. Cutting it out, cleaning and drying the joints, and resealing gives a clean, sound joint. Care is needed not to damage the steel frames or the plaster.

7. **After the sealant, rub down the affected reveals, prime with a mould resistant primer and finish to match the room.**

Suitable trade: A painter and decorator.

MODERATE The reveals will stay colder than the rest of the room because of the steel frames. A mould resistant finish makes them less hospitable to mould, but it does not stop condensation forming, so it works alongside the measures above, not instead of them.

Further investigation

WHAT	WHY	WHAT IT WOULD ESTABLISH	ACCESS
Winter monitoring: a temperature and humidity logger in each of the three rooms for a few weeks, with surface temperatures taken on the glass, the frames and the reveals on a cold morning.	The inspection was on a mild day with no condensation forming. Readings in cold weather, compared with the dew point, show how close the reveals come to condensation and whether the dehumidifiers are bringing the humidity down enough. The controls of 7.3 to 8.2 %WME are the benchmark for the reveal readings.	Whether the measures taken are enough, or whether a room needs more dehumidification or ventilation.	Non destructive

Limitations of this inspection

Opening up	None undertaken
Instruments used	Thermal imaging, Moisture meter, Hygrometer, Surface thermometer
Weather qualification	Dry at the time of inspection, with rainfall not recorded in the previous 48 hours
Outside the scope of this report	Timber decay, which requires a CSRT qualified surveyor, Ventilation flow rates

How to read the readings in this report

Moisture readings are comparative. They are taken with an electrical resistance meter and expressed as a wood moisture equivalent, %WME. On plaster and masonry this is a comparative indication, not a measurement of how much water the material contains. That is why readings are given against a control taken in an unaffected area of the same room.

Green, below 17 %WME
Dry

Amber, 17 to 19 %WME
At risk

Red, 20 %WME and above
Wet

A hatched square marked x in a moisture grid is a position that could not be reached, for example behind fitted furniture. It is not a dry reading.

Dew point is calculated, not measured, from the recorded air temperature and relative humidity using the Magnus approximation. Where a surface temperature has been measured, comparing the two shows whether condensation is occurring on that surface.

Where a moisture grid is shown, the readings are laid out on the surface they were taken from. The pattern is diagnostic. Moisture rising from the ground declines with height, a localised patch points to water entering at that point, and a band with an abrupt upper edge usually means plaster carried too low rather than groundwater.

Use of this report as an example

We publish anonymised examples of our work so that people can see what a Vigilant survey report actually contains before they book one. We do that only with the written agreement of the client the report was written for. The name, the property address and the postcode are removed, along with any photograph that would identify the home or show anything personal. This copy is published on that basis.

Vigilant Surveys

Rory Thorne, Damp & Compliance Surveyor. Specimen report.

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Readings are comparative %WME. Green below 17, amber 17 to 19, red 20 and above.