**Friends of Oxford dean leaving with £1.4million in sex storm deny he settled with the alleged victim as they accuse his rivals of 'pure defamation'**

**Very Reverend Professor Martyn Percy stepped down from Christ Church**

**The college said he had settled a sexual harassment claim with an individual**

**But his allies said this was not true, saying there was no financial settlement**

**By**[**MICHAEL POWELL FOR THE MAIL ON SUNDAY**](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/search.html?s=&authornamef=Michael+Powell+for+The+Mail+on+Sunday)

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Friends of the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, have accused his rivals of ‘pure defamation’ after the college claimed he was stepping down following a settlement with a woman who accused him of sexual harassment.

In a statement on Friday evening, Christ Church announced that the Very Reverend Professor Martyn Percy was leaving, adding: ‘An individual who accused the dean of sexual harassment has settled her claim with the dean, on terms which, at her request, are confidential.’

But furious allies of the dean last night told The Mail on Sunday that this was not true. ‘The dean has not reached any financial settlement or issued any apology to the woman. He continues to deny her claims and this is pure defamation,’ a source close to Prof Percy said.



**The Very Reverend Professor Martyn Percy has been embroiled in a four-year dispute with the governing body of Christ Church college**

In fact, said the sources, he has been paid a ‘substantial’ settlement by Christ Church – believed to be in the region of £1.4 million – after dons agreed to end a torrid four-year campaign to oust him.

The saga has cost the historic college about £20 million in legal fees, payouts and lost revenue from donations.

College trustees are being investigated by the Charity Commission watchdog over the astonishing amounts spent trying to force the dean from office.

The row began in 2018 when Prof Percy fought with dons over a request to increase his £90,000 salary. Since then he has faced 41 separate allegations, all of which have been dismissed. Prof Percy was suspended for a second time in 2020 after a woman accused him of stroking her hair in the vestry of Christ Church Cathedral and making inappropriate sexual remarks. He vehemently denied her claims and said he did not touch her or act improperly.

Police decided not to act on the woman’s complaint.

An internal investigation conducted by Dame Sarah Asplin, a judge in the Court of Appeal, found that it would be ‘entirely disproportionate that this matter should be referred to a tribunal’.



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Her report said: ‘The incident itself was extremely short, the alleged hair stroking was even shorter and the language and the conduct as a whole was not overtly sexual. It also noted that ‘Ms X accepts that she was not upset in any way’.

Prof Percy’s supporters believe the woman was encouraged to complain and ‘weaponised’ by trustees for their war with the dean. In 2020, the MoS revealed how Prof Percy’s rivals exchanged emails in which they described him as a ‘manipulative little t\*\*d’ and as having a ‘personality disorder’.

In one, a don wrote: ‘I’m always ready to think the worst of him. Does anyone know any good poisoners?’ A colleague fantasised about ‘the Inspector Morse episode we could make when his wrinkly withered little body’ is found.

Last night, Jonathan Aitken, the former Tory Minister and a Christ Church alumnus, said the settlement represented ‘a total capitulation’ by Prof Percy’s rivals.

He said: ‘The civil war is over, but profound questions remain over how on earth was this scandalous amount of charity money spent on trying to force the dean out of office.’

The college said: ‘Christ Church can now confirm that the mediation process has been concluded and that a resolution has been reached that is acceptable to all parties.’

Prof Percy, who will step down in April, said: ‘I look forward to resuming a normal life with my wife Emma, who has been such a rock of strength during this painful struggle.’